Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts: Findings From 2002-03

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Executive Summary

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) aims to strengthen state Title I accountability systems to spur the improvement needed to reach the law's goals: that all students will reach proficiency by 2013-14. NCLB requires states and districts to report and act on student test results in a host of new ways. Among the many actions states and districts must take under NCLB's accountability system are identifying schools that repeatedly do not make progress, providing assistance to schools that need to improve, and offering more choices to parents.

To understand how states, districts, and schools are implementing these accountability provisions, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts (TASSIE)* beginning with the 2001-02 school year as a baseline year and continuing for two more years. The study has gathered data from educators in schools, district offices, and state education agencies through surveys and interviews and from parents through focus groups. This report covers the 2002-03 school year, and focuses on how the following key aspects of Title I accountability provisions in NCLB were carried out during the first year NCLB was in effect: the assistance and interventions provided to Title I schools identified for improvement, the steps these schools are taking to improve, and public school choice and supplemental services offered to students in these schools.

States were not required to have everything in place during 2002-03, but they were expected to implement many key accountability provisions and meet certain benchmarks for others. Findings from 2001-02 suggested that states, districts, and schools were well positioned to meet the requirements of NCLB but would need to make substantial changes to fully meet the challenges of the new law. Findings from 2002-03 show that states and districts were making progress in implementing accountability systems under NCLB, but big gaps remained between their existing systems of accountability and the vision embodied in NCLB of coherent systems that support all schools and all students to reach high standards.

Context for the 2002-03 School Year

The consequences outlined in NCLB for identified schools and districts were to be applied during the law's first full year, the 2002-03 school year, making identified schools and districts in 2002-03 the first to be subject to NLCB accountability requirements. Because states were developing adequate yearly progress (AYP) definitions following NCLB criteria during 2002-03, these definitions were not applied to identify schools and districts in that year. Instead, NCLB laid out transition rules for 2002-03: schools and districts were to be identified based on their improvement status as of Jan. 7, 2002—the day before NCLB was enacted. For example, a school in its first year of improvement as of Jan. 7, 2002, was to be identified as a school in its first year of improvement under NCLB. Similarly, a school in its second year of improvement as of Jan. 7, 2002, was to be identified as a school in its second year of improvement under NCLB. The exception to these transition rules was that a school in improvement on Jan. 7 that had made one year of AYP in 2000-01 and could exit improvement status if it also made AYP based on its 2001-02 assessment results. States were also permitted to identify schools for

improvement in 2002-03 that had missed AYP for the first time based on their 2000-01 assessment results (and thus were not identified for improvement as of Jan. 7, 2002) and also missed AYP based on their 2001-02 assessment results. Similar transition rules applied to districts.

Despite the transition rules, case study data indicate that other issues contributed to the challenge of achieving widespread understanding of which schools were identified in 2002-03, such as changes in some state assessments, the presence in some states of parallel state accountability systems that use criteria different from AYP, anticipated changes to state definitions of AYP under NCLB, and ongoing confusion at the local level about school identification status. For example, in 30 percent of the study's Title I schools identified for improvement in 2001-02 that continued to be identified in 2002-03, the principal was not aware of the school's status.

Because of transitional policies that applied for only 2002-03 and new definitions of AYP under NCLB to be implemented in 2003-04, inferences about trends in numbers of schools and districts identified for improvement should be made with caution. In addition, because the incentives underlying NCLB cannot be expected to have their full effect if schools and districts do not know which schools are identified for improvement, in light of evidence of some confusion at the local level about which schools were identified, data from 2002-03 should be considered only a first glimpse into the influence of NCLB. The report for the final year of this study, 2003-04, will show how implementation of NCLB is changing during its first few years.

Title I Schools and Districts Identified for Improvement

Under NCLB, schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years must be "identified for improvement." The same rule applies to districts.

In 2002-03, 6,000 schools were identified for improvement under Title I, representing 13 percent of all Title I schools nationwide. About 9,000 schools were identified in 2001-02. Less than half (46 percent) of the Title I schools that had been identified for improvement in 2001-02 continued to be identified in 2002-03. Schools that remained in improvement status did not differ on factors such as district and school size and poverty level, and school level (elementary, middle or high school) from schools that were no longer identified. About one-third (approximately 2,000) of the identified schools in 2002-03 were newly identified.

A similar pattern held for districts identified for improvement. In 2002-03, eight states reported they had identified any of their districts for improvement, and the number of districts identified for improvement decreased from 15 percent in 2001-02 to 5 percent in 2002-03.

Of roughly 11,200 districts nationwide with Title I schools, 16 percent (around 1,900) had at least one identified Title I school in 2002-03 compared with 26 percent (around 2,900) in 2001-02—a decline of 10 percent.[1] Of the Title I schools identified in 2002-03, a

[1] The district sample is a nationally representative sample of all districts receiving Title I funds. Percentages can vary from estimated numbers due to rounding of estimates. These estimates are based on data from the TASSIE Eligibility Dataset and vary slightly from estimates derived from respondents to the district survey due to rounding (see page xviii).

higher percentage were located in urban and high-poverty districts than in rural and lower-poverty districts (see Exhibit S1), but almost half (47 percent) were still located in districts with enrollments under 10,449 students (52 percent in 2001-02).

Exhibit S1

Title I Schools Identified for Improvement and All Title I Schools in 2002-03, by District Size, Location and Poverty Distributions

	Number of Title I schools identified for improvement	Percent of all Title I identified schools	Percent of all Title I schools	Percent of schools identified within categories
District size, by student enrollment				
Small (200 to 3,503)	1,738	29	40	9
Medium (3,504 to 10, 448)	883	15	24	8
Large (10, 449 to 37,740)	1,246	21	17	15
Very large (>37, 740)	2,135	36	19	24
Total	6,002	100	100	13
Location				
Rural	1,766	29	42	9
Suburban	1,416	24	32	9
Urban	2,820	47	25	23
Total	6,002	100	100	13
District poverty, by percent of children living in poverty				
Lowest poverty (<11 percent)	701	12	23	6
Middle poverty (11 to 22 percent)	1,682	28	36	10
Highest poverty (>22 percent)	3,618	60	41	18
Total	6,002	100	100	13

Exhibit reads: An estimated 1,738 Title I schools in small districts were identified for improvement in 2002-03, which represent 29 percent of all identified Title I schools in the nation. Small districts contained an estimated 19,188 Title I schools overall, or 40 percent of all Title I schools. In small districts, an estimated 9 percent of Title I schools (i.e., 1,738 divided by 19,188) had been identified for improvement.

Most districts with identified Title I schools had very few identified schools overall. Across all districts with identified Title I schools, the majority (57 percent) had only one school identified and tended to be small districts with few schools (see Exhibit S2). In terms of proportions, 39 percent of districts with identified schools had less than a quarter of their schools identified for improvement and 12 percent had over three-quarters of their schools identified. Smaller districts were more likely than others to have high proportions of identified schools because their total number of schools is small.

Exhibit S2

Distribution of Identified Title I Schools Across All Districts and Districts With Identified Title I Schools

Number of schools identified for improvement	Percent of all districts	Percent of districts with identified schools
0	84	NA
1	10	57
2	3	15
3-4	2	13
5-12	2	10
13+	<1	2

Exhibit reads: Eighty-four percent of all districts had no Title I schools identified for improvement in 2002-03. Fifty-seven percent of districts with identified schools had only one identified school.

School Improvement and District Assistance in Identified Schools

NCLB requires states and districts to have systems of support in place for Title I schools identified for improvement. States must establish statewide systems of school support and districts must provide ongoing technical assistance to schools as they develop and implement their school plans. In particular, districts must help schools analyze student achievement data and develop plans for improvement, revise their budgets so that resources are effectively allocated to the activities most likely to increase student academic achievement, implement professional development, and put in place instructional practices that have shown evidence of effectiveness.

Although most states and districts provided school support teams or distinguished educators to identified schools in 2002-03, a third of states had not done so, and many identified schools reported that they had not received either of these forms of assistance.[2] Twenty-eight states organized school support teams, distinguished educators, or both to provide assistance to identified schools. Similarly, nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of districts provided support teams, principal coaches or mentors, or distinguished educators to identified schools. This assistance ranged from occasional visits to full-time presence in the school.[3]

However, nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of principals of schools that continued to be identified in 2002-03 reported that their schools had *not* received help from a school support team, a principal coach or mentor, or a distinguished teacher (see Exhibit S3). The proportion of schools receiving at least one of these forms of assistance had not improved since the year before. In fact, assistance from school support teams was received by fewer schools in 2002-03

[2] Identified schools in this section refer to the sample of Title I schools that were identified for improvement in both 2001-02 and 2002-03. In 2001-02, the sample of identified schools was nationally representative. In 2002-03, the sample is the subset that were continuously identified in both years.

[3] Descriptive statements without reference to statistics are based on case studies of 20 schools and their 15 districts. These data were used to enhance understanding of survey results.

(28 percent) than the previous year (46 percent). This drop is surprising, since these schools had been identified for one additional year, and therefore should have been in even greater need of assistance.

Exhibit S3

School Reports of On-site Assistance, Among Title I Schools That Continued to Be Identified for Improvement

	Percent of identified schools reporting that they received assistance
School support team	25
Principal mentor or coach	20
Distinguished teacher	13
Any of these forms of assistance (i.e., school support team, principal mentor, or distinguished teacher)	38

Exhibit reads: Twenty-five percent of all Title I schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 reported that they received help from a school support team.

Even when continuously identified schools were located in districts or states that provided some form of on-site assistance, the proportion reporting that they received that assistance was still low. Among schools in districts that fielded school support teams, only a third reported that they received assistance from a team. Similarly, only a third of the continuously identified schools located in *states* that fielded support teams reported that they received assistance from a team. Although 91 percent of schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 were located in districts or in states that reported offering some type of on-site assistance to identified schools (either school support teams, distinguished teachers, or other types of assistance), the evidence suggests that these forms of on-site assistance were not available to every school.

Finally, 9 percent of schools that continued to be identified in 2002-03 were located in districts where neither the state nor the district offered school support teams, distinguished teachers, or principal mentors.

Not all districts and schools had the organizational capacity in place—including staffing, time, and materials—that would enable them to provide and take advantage of assistance; this was particularly true for small and rural districts. Small and rural districts—which served roughly a third of all identified schools in 2002-03—had limited staff and resources to provide assistance to identified schools. Only half (49 percent) of rural districts provided school support teams, distinguished teachers, principal mentors, or some combination of the three, to their identified schools, compared with three-quarters of urban districts (75 percent). In contrast, large and urban districts were more likely to provide assistance of various kinds. For example, only one-fifth (21 percent) of small districts provided additional full-time staff to support teacher development in identified schools whereas two-thirds (64 percent) of very large districts provided such assistance (see Exhibit S4).

Exhibit S4

Assistance Provided by the District to Identified Schools, by District Size

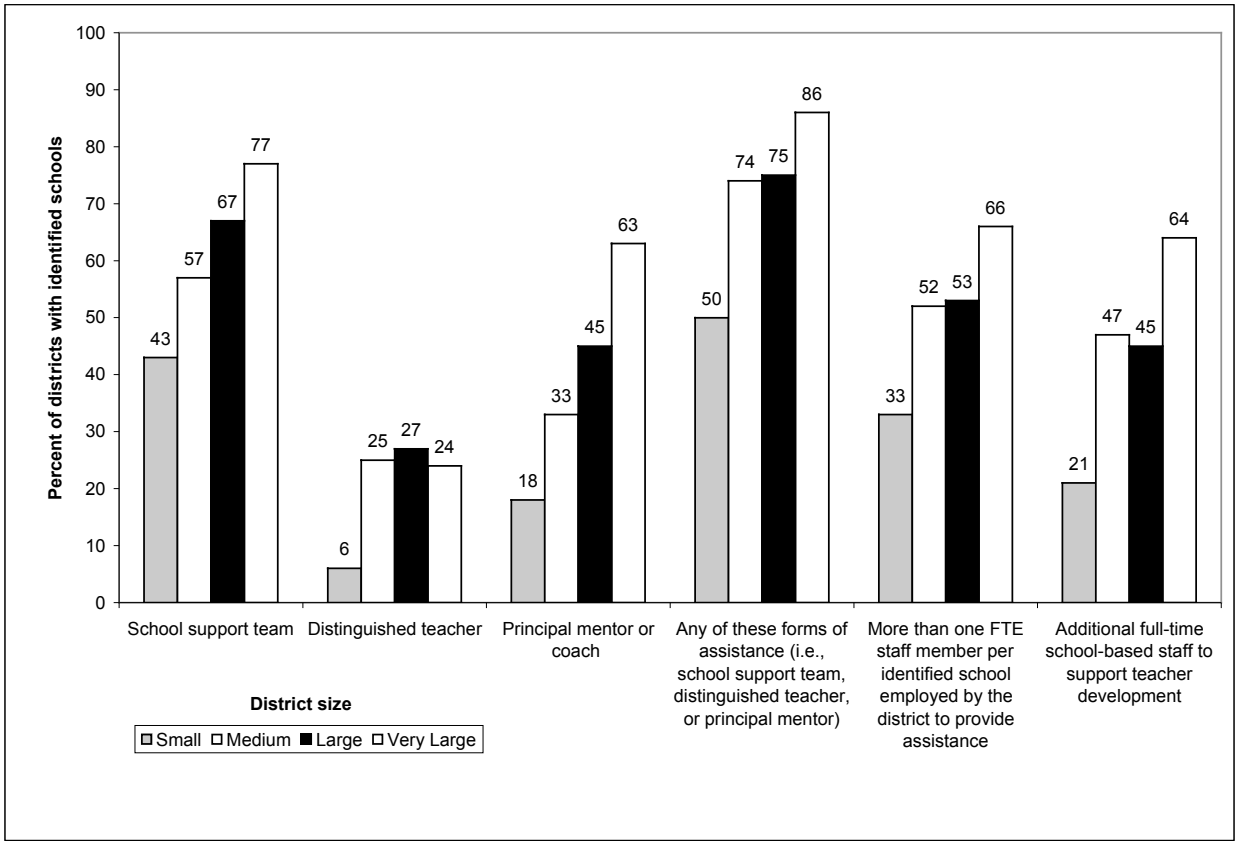


Exhibit Reads: Among districts with identified schools, 43 percent of small districts, 57 percent of medium sized districts, 67 percent of large districts, and 77 percent of very large districts provided school support teams to identified schools in 2002-03.

Schools also need a minimal organizational structure in place—including adequate staffing—to be able to benefit from assistance that is provided. In case study districts, identified schools with minimal instructional leadership, limited resources, and high concentrations of poor children struggled to benefit from district assistance.

School improvement efforts and district assistance focused predominantly on increasing the use of achievement data, matching curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments, and undertaking school planning. In their efforts to improve low-performing schools, 86 percent of districts with identified schools reported placing a major focus on aligning curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments and 77 percent reported a major focus on increasing the use of student achievement data to inform instruction and school improvement (see Exhibit S5).

Exhibit S5

Percent of Districts That Placed a Major Focus on Strategies for Improving Low-Performing Schools, Among Districts With Identified Schools

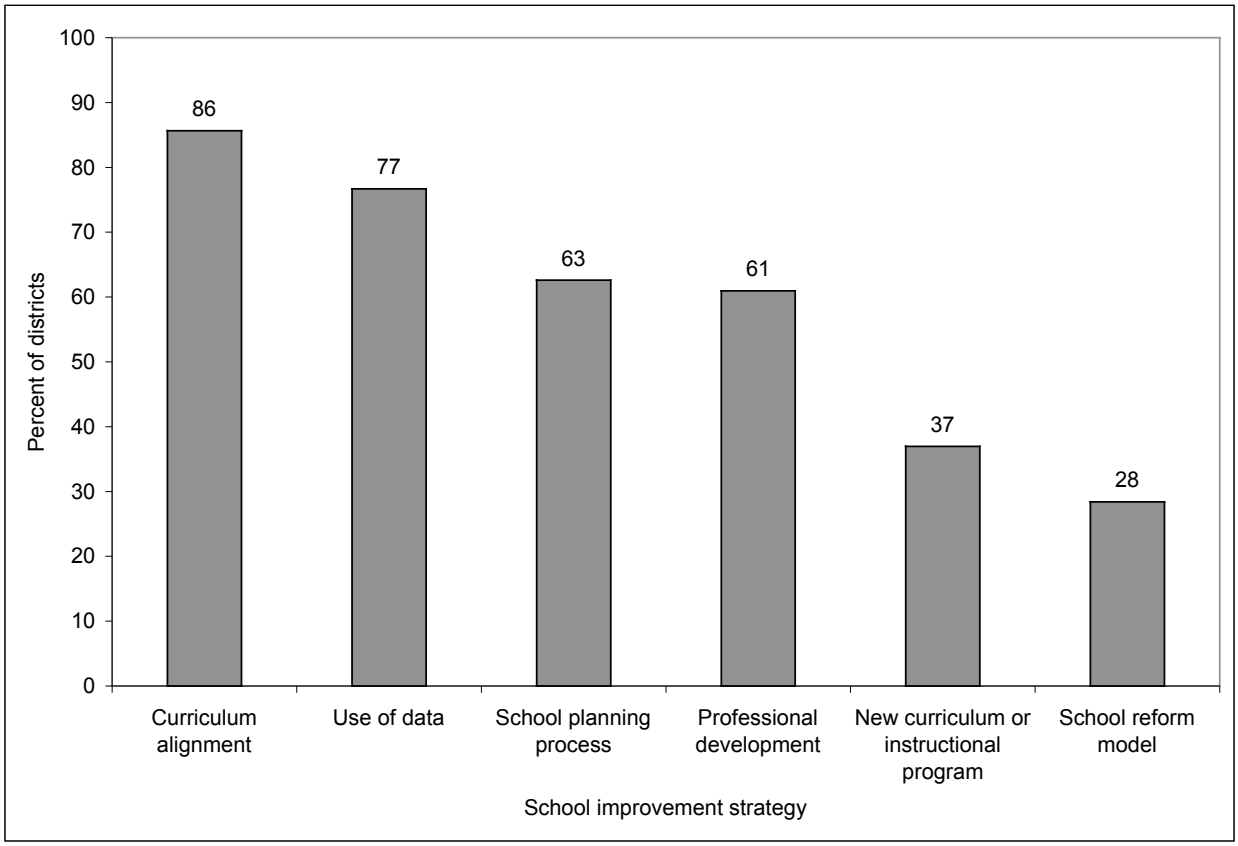


Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools, 86 percent reported that matching curriculum and instruction with standards, assessments, or both is a major focus of district resources for low-performing schools.

The percentage of continuously identified schools citing the use of student achievement data as a major focus area for school improvement increased from 75 percent in 2001-02 to 86 percent in 2002-03. However, school uses of achievement data focused more on schoolwide planning and less on instructional decisions about students. In the case study districts, whether or not schools used data for instructional decisions about students was related to the availability of diagnostic data and assistance in determining its implications for instruction. Even uses of data in planning were limited; for example, although almost all (93 percent) continuously identified schools developed school plans, only about half (53 percent) monitored progress toward the plan's goals at least quarterly.

Curriculum alignment with standards and assessments was reported by districts as a major focus of school improvement; however, integrating new curricula with existing practices was not a focus of district or school improvement efforts. Almost one-third (32 percent) of continuously identified schools adopted new curricula in both language arts *and* math in the last three years (i.e., between 2000-01 and 2002-03). In case study districts, schools layered new

programs on top of existing programs, raising issues of how to cope with multiple new programs and how best to mesh the new with the old.

Of the continuously identified schools that adopted new reading or mathematics curricula or school reform models, most reported emphasizing related professional development or receiving a minimum level of related district assistance; fewer reported receiving both.[4] For example, of the almost six in ten schools (58 percent) that continued to be identified and reported adopting a new language arts program in the last three years, 85 percent reported either emphasizing related professional development or receiving a minimum level of related district assistance (see Exhibit S6). At the same time, less than half (43 percent) reported receiving both. Similarly, almost three-quarters (71 percent) of schools adopting a new mathematics curriculum (48 percent) reported either emphasizing related professional development or receiving a minimum level of related district assistance while 11 percent reported receiving both.

Districts reported providing professional development to identified schools at higher rates than schools with adopted improvement strategies reported receiving such support. Among districts with identified schools, 95 percent reported supporting professional development in language arts instruction in identified schools. One would expect the highest rates of professional development for schools adopting new curricula yet only 72 percent of such schools reported emphasizing related professional development. This represented 42 percent of all identified schools. A similar pattern held for mathematics. Among districts with identified schools, 80 percent reported supporting professional development in mathematics instruction in identified schools, yet only 38 percent of continuously identified schools that had adopted a new mathematics curriculum reported emphasizing professional development. This represented 18 percent of all continuously identified schools. These differences might be due to the amount (for example, only one workshop) and quality of the professional development provided by districts, and whether or not it met the needs of the teachers. If districts provided only minimal or poor quality training, schools were unlikely to describe it as an area of emphasis. Another reason for the difference in responses may be that districts supported professional development in some identified schools but not in others.

Additional school staff without classroom responsibilities (e.g., staff developers, curriculum specialists) played an important role in school improvement in the case studies. Yet only a third (33 percent) of districts with identified schools reported that identified schools had been assigned additional full-time staff whose specific job was to support teacher development. Even fewer (23 percent) continuously identified schools reported that they had been assigned such staff by their district or state.

Although districts provided a range of assistance to identified schools, they seldom targeted assistance and interventions only to schools identified for improvement. Districts typically provided some kinds of assistance to *all* of their schools, whether or not they were low-performing or identified for improvement under Title I. For example, nearly three-quarters (71

[4] The definitions and scales underlying "emphasizing related professional development" and "receiving a minimum level of related district assistance" are described in the appendix.

Exhibit S6

Of Continuously Identified Schools Engaged in Different Improvement Activities, Percent That Emphasized Related Professional Development or Received a Minimum Level of Related District Assistance

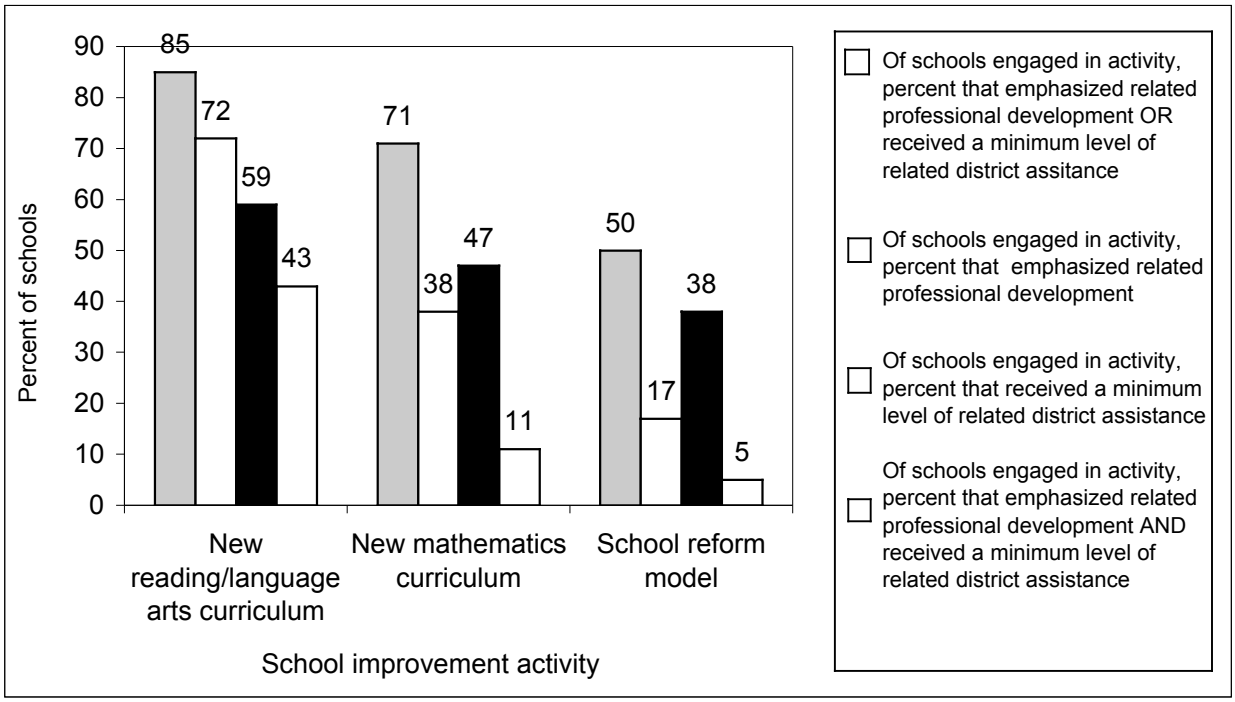


Exhibit reads: Among schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 and reported implementing a new language arts program, 85 percent reported emphasizing related professional development *or* receiving a minimum level of related district assistance; 72 percent reported emphasizing related professional development; 59 percent reported receiving a minimum level of related district assistance; and 43 percent reported emphasizing related professional development *and* receiving a minimum level of related district assistance.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

percent) of districts helped all their schools write a school improvement plan, including those that were higher-performing. Only a small number (13 percent) provided such assistance only to identified schools. Similar ratios held for other types of support. In addition, almost all districts had the same reading and mathematics curriculum requirements for all schools, whether they were higher-performing, low-performing, or identified for improvement under Title I. This may explain why principals of continuously identified schools cited reasons of instructional consistency (i.e., standardized curricula), not Title I identification, for adopting new reading and language arts curricula.

Although most districts provided the same kinds of curricula and assistance to all their schools, some attempted to provide additional resources to their low-performing schools through targeting external grants or more intensive assistance. However, districts rarely distinguished between schools identified for improvement and other low-performing schools because, as observed in case study districts, schools move in and out of identification status and were

perceived to have similar needs. This helps explain the finding that districts with low-performing schools, none of which were identified for improvement, provided similar kinds of support as districts with identified schools.

Public School Choice and Supplemental Services Under Title I

NCLB required districts with identified Title I schools to implement public school choice under Title I and supplemental services as of the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. All districts with any Title I school identified for improvement (16 percent of all Title I districts nationwide or 1,800 school districts)[5] were required to provide parents of students attending identified Title I schools the choice to transfer their child to another public school in the district not identified for improvement and provide transportation (see Exhibit S7). Districts with Title I schools in their second year of improvement, corrective action or restructuring (11 percent of

Exhibit S7

Participation in Title I Choice and Supplemental Services in 2002-03, Among Districts With Identified Schools

	School choice	Supplemental services
Districts:		
Number required to offer option	1,800	1,100
Number where option offered	1,200	500
Percent where option offered	67%	48%
Schools:		
Number where option required	6,000	1,300
Number where option offered	5,100	800
Percent where option offered	84%	58%
Students (among districts that provided options):		
Number eligible	1,535,000	592,000
Number that participated	18,000	42,000
Percent that participated	1%	7%

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified Title I schools, an estimated 1,800 were required to offer school choice to students enrolled in identified Title I schools and 1,100 districts were required to offer supplemental services to low-income students in Title I schools identified for two or more years. The data presented in this exhibit are estimates at the 95 percent confidence interval with 32 degrees of freedom and estimates have been rounded.

Note: The number of students eligible is underestimated because not all districts that should have provided choice and supplemental services reported providing these options and did not provide eligibility data. See Exhibits 21, 30 and 31 for explanations regarding the limitations of these data.

[5] The 1,800 estimate was derived from respondents to the district survey which represented 16 percent of all Title I districts when rounded. Survey analyses were based on the 1,800 districts with identified schools in 2002-03 (see the appendix regarding statistical analyses).

districts nationwide or 1,100 LEAs) were required to offer supplemental services (e.g., tutoring) in addition to school choice. Because Title I school choice and supplemental services were new requirements for most districts in 2002-03 (though some more limited Title I choice requirements applied to certain schools in 1999-2000), implementation for most districts in 2002-03 represented their initial efforts to implement these requirements.

The majority of districts required to offer school choice to parents of students attending a Title I identified school did so in 2002-03. Two-thirds (67 percent) of districts with identified Title I schools (about 1,200 districts) offered public school choice and 62 percent of districts with identified schools offered all non-identified schools in the district as an option to parents of students in Title I identified schools (see Exhibit S8). Districts that provided Title I choice included approximately 5,100 identified schools or 84 percent of the identified Title I schools in 2002-03. Districts that did not offer public school choice (33 percent of those required to do so) were predominantly small, rural, and poor.

Exhibit S8

School Choice Options Available to Parents of Children Enrolled in Identified Title I Schools, Among Districts That Provided Choice

School choice options provided	Percent of districts with identified schools
All other schools in the district at the appropriate grade level that are not identified for improvement under Title I	62
A subset of schools that have been paired with the sending school	19
All other schools within a certain geographic zone	15
Public schools outside the district	5
Other	8

Exhibit reads: Among all districts with identified schools that offered Title I choice, 62 percent offered all other schools in the districts at the appropriate grade level that were not identified for improvement as a choice option.

In 2002-03, few parents exercised their option to transfer to a non-identified school. In the 67 percent of districts that offered choice under Title I, there were an estimated 1.5 million students eligible to exercise choice because they attended an identified Title I school. About 2 percent (28,000 students) requested a transfer to a non-identified school and about 1 percent (18,000 students) then transferred to another school. Over three-quarters (77 percent) of districts with identified schools that offered choice had nine or fewer students transfer out of identified schools. Eighteen percent had between 10 and 99 students and 5 percent had 100 or more students transfer out of identified schools.

As was true in 2001-02, districts pointed to lack of space and an inability to create additional space as the greatest challenges to successful implementation of public school choice in 2002-03. NCLB does not exempt districts facing these obstacles from the requirement to offer Title I choice, although districts may take capacity into account when deciding which schools to offer as transfer options. Small districts were more likely than others to have responded that *no* alternate schools existed or that transportation was a serious problem, whereas

suburban districts were more likely than others to have responded that lack of space in alternate schools was a serious problem. Given the smaller number of middle and high schools compared to elementary schools in a district, choices for students in the upper grades were far more limited in all districts and essentially nonexistent in small and rural districts.

About half of the districts required to offer supplemental services in 2002-03 did so; in those districts, few students received services. Forty-eight percent of districts (an estimated 500 LEAs) required to offer supplemental services provided these services; 62 percent of districts required to offer supplemental services made the services available to all low-income students because demand did not exceed funding (i.e., the amount equal to 20 percent of the district Title I, Part A, allocation). As was true with choice, districts that did not offer supplemental services were predominantly small, rural, and poor. Of the 592,000 eligible students in districts that offered supplemental services in approximately 800 identified Title I schools, roughly 7 percent (42,000 students) received services from an approved provider in 2002-03.[6]

Approved providers in 2002-03 represented a variety of organizations, but private providers (e.g., not-for-profit private groups or for-profit organizations) made up the largest percentage (70 percent), many of which were national providers. Although the numbers of providers in states continued to increase in 2003, they did not adequately address some local needs: providers were scarce in rural areas, some did not serve districts with small numbers of students for financial reasons, and some did not serve students with special needs. These were among the challenges districts faced in ensuring the provision of supplemental services in 2002-03 (see Exhibit S9).

Parents faced challenges in understanding their options and in acting on them. Many districts (55 percent) with identified Title I schools that provided choice missed the deadline to notify parents of students in these schools of their public school choice option before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. One-fifth (21 percent) of districts with eligible students had not communicated with parents as of spring 2003 regarding their right to receive supplemental services because the district had not yet begun to provide those services. Delays in identifying which schools were identified for improvement in 2002-03 and the fact that very few states (only five) had given a list of approved providers to districts before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year contributed to the delays in notifying parents. Even when parents received notification materials, they did not necessarily understand the information contained in the materials and some districts did not clearly communicate the options open to them.

Nevertheless, according to focus groups with parents in identified schools, awareness of options appeared to be only one factor that influenced parents' choices. Few parents requested supplemental services for reasons that included preexisting after-school programs or providers

[6] Only 55 percent of the 11 percent of districts required to offer supplemental services in 2002-03 reported that they had students eligible to receive supplemental services and, hence, the number of students eligible for supplemental services is underestimated (but the number of students receiving supplemental services is not since these data are based on districts actually providing services).

Exhibit S9

Challenges Faced by Districts That Implemented Supplemental Services, Among Districts That Provided Services

Type of challenge	Great extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all
Lack of providers in the area	48	6	6	41
Lack of an established reputation for providers with parents	18	27	24	30
Competition from existing after-school programs	16	8	33	44
Inadequacy of an amount equal to 20% of the district's Title I allocation for meeting all requests for services or providing transportation to all students who request a transfer to alternate schools	6	3	11	81
Inadequate time for parents to learn about supplemental services	3	13	22	62
Inadequate information for parents about supplemental services	1	8	20	71

Exhibit reads: Among districts required to offer and provided supplemental services in 2002-03, 48 percent responded that a lack of providers in the area was a challenge to a great extent to implement supplemental services, 6 percent responded that such a lack was a challenge to a moderate extent, 6 percent responded that it was a challenge to a small extent, and 41 percent responded that it was not a challenge.

located far from the school. Similarly, the small percentage of students that requested a transfer to a non-identified school were associated with several factors parents considered other than the school's identification for improvement. Parent focus groups revealed that parents were concerned about the performance of their children rather than the school as a whole and considered factors such as the availability of special programs and services, qualities of individual staff members, proximity of the school, and a desire to have their children with others from the neighborhood.

Corrective Actions

NCLB requires districts to take a set of corrective actions with schools that do not make AYP for two years after being identified for improvement ("corrective action" schools). These actions range from those that overlap with assistance and support (e.g., requiring a new research-based curriculum) to those that are clearly interventions (e.g., replacing school staff).

Few districts in 2002-03 had identified schools subject to corrective actions; therefore, the impacts of NCLB's corrective actions were not broad. Only about 400 districts (4 percent) nationwide reported that they had schools identified for improvement for three years or more; most focused on assistance (i.e., requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum.

Conclusions

During the first year NCLB was in effect, states, most districts, and schools took actions consistent with NCLB requirements, but the gap between the expectations of the law and practice remained large in 2002-03: not all NCLB reporting requirements had been implemented, two-thirds of identified schools reported no access to certain key forms of state or district on-site assistance, school improvement efforts were often not accompanied by related professional development or other supports, a third of districts with identified schools did not provide public school choice, and half of districts with schools identified for two or more years did not offer supplemental services. States and districts with more established organizational structures for supporting school improvement efforts and the staff to carry them out were in a better position to implement NCLB's requirements than those with little or no such systems in place. Yet even in these states and districts with established structures to support school improvement, aligning existing practices with NCLB was proving to take time. Given the complexity of the NCLB legislation, findings based on data from the first year of implementation should be interpreted with caution. The full report provides more detailed 2002-03 data from both the surveys and the case studies. The next and final report based on this study, which will focus on the 2003-04 school year, will build on findings from 2002-03 to show how NCLB implementation is changing over time.

I Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) aims to strengthen state Title I accountability systems to spur the improvement needed to reach the law's goals: that all students will reach proficiency by 2013-14. NCLB, the 2001 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), requires states and districts to report and act on student test results in a host of new ways. Among the many actions states and districts must take under NCLB's accountability system are identifying schools that repeatedly do not make progress, providing assistance to schools that need to improve, and offering more choices to parents.

To understand how states, districts, and schools are implementing these accountability provisions, the U. S. Department of Education commissioned the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts (TASSIE)*, beginning with 2001-02 as a baseline year and continuing for two more years. Findings from the 2001-02 school year suggested states, districts, and schools were well positioned to meet the requirements of NCLB but would need to make substantial changes to fully meet the challenges of the new law. This report covers the 2002-03 school year.

The 2002-03 school year was the first year that states and districts that received Title I funds had to respond to the new accountability requirements in NCLB. States were not required to have everything in place during 2002-03, but they were expected to implement many key accountability provisions and meet certain benchmarks for others.

The consequences outlined in NCLB for identified schools and districts were to be applied during the law's first full year, the 2002-03 school year, making identified schools and districts in 2002-03 the first to be subject to NLCB accountability requirements. Schools and districts, however, were not identified based on definitions of AYP developed under NCLB. Those definitions did not take effect until the 2003-04 school year. Rather, for 2002-03, schools and districts maintained the improvement status they held as of Jan. 7, 2002, under the prior authorization of ESEA. The 2002-03 data in this report thus offer only a first glimpse into the intended influence of NCLB.

Against this backdrop, districts moved forward with notifying the public about school performance, provided assistance to identified schools, offered school choice and supplemental educational services to children in Title I schools identified for improvement ("identified schools"), and applied interventions to schools that were not sufficiently improving. Similarly, schools continued to focus on planning for and implementing improvement efforts.

The report focuses on the following key issues, tied to the major accountability provisions of NCLB:

- The characteristics of schools and districts identified for improvement in 2002-03 (Chapter I).
- Support provided to identified schools, the school improvement efforts undertaken by these schools to increase student achievement, and the ways that states and districts communicated to parents and the public about school performance (Chapter II).
- Efforts to offer public school choice and supplemental educational services to eligible students in identified Title I schools (Chapter III).
- Interventions for identified schools—the corrective actions and restructuring or alternative governance arrangements imposed by districts on schools that continued not to make adequate yearly progress in 2002-03 (Chapter IV).

Background: Accountability Provisions of Title I

NCLB frames a common goal for educators: to ensure that no child, regardless of background, is left behind by the nation's public education system. In particular, NCLB has strengthened accountability requirements for schools, districts, and states, and sought to address the shortcomings and uneven implementation of accountability systems under the previous reauthorization of Title I.

NCLB requires states to develop and implement a single, statewide accountability system that will be effective in ensuring that all districts and schools make AYP, and to hold those schools that do not do so accountable. The legislation was designed to help all students reach proficiency in a specified time period (by 2013-14) by requiring that states create annual assessments that measure what children know and can do in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 as well as testing at least once between grades 10 and 12 by 2005-06, and in science by 2007-08 (see Exhibit 1).[7] Assessment data are to be disaggregated for students by poverty level, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency (LEP) to ensure that attention is focused on all students and that all schools are held accountable for reaching AYP targets for students in each major subgroup at the school. To AYP calculations based primarily on state assessment results in language arts and mathematics, NCLB adds minimum assessment participation rates of 95 percent, graduation rates for high schools, and at least one other state-selected academic indicator for elementary and middle schools. Annual school "report cards" are required to provide comparative information on the quality of all schools so that parents can make more informed choices about their children's education. The report cards are to show not only how well students are doing in regard to meeting standards, but also the progress that disaggregated groups are making in closing achievement gaps.

[7] NCLB does not require that science assessments be used to determine AYP.

Exhibit 1

Summary of Key NCLB Accountability Requirements

Topics	NCLB requirements
Single, statewide system	All students must be assessed by the same state assessment, and AYP definitions must apply to all schools and districts in the state, both Title I and non-Title I.
Public reporting	State and district report cards are required to include information on state assessment results, schools and districts identified for improvement, and certain other information.
Performance measures used in AYP definitions	Annual state assessments must be administered to students in reading or language arts and mathematics. Assessments must be administered at least once in grades 3-5 and 6-9 until 2005-06, when all grades 3-8 must be assessed; assessments also must be administered at least once in grades 10-12. Assessment participation rates, graduation rates, and another academic indicator for elementary and middle schools must be included. States can include additional indicators.
Criteria for state definitions of AYP for **schools**	The criteria must include absolute targets for each measure of school performance. Participation rate targets must be at least 95 percent. The criteria must provide for all students reaching proficiency within 12 years, and set annual measurable objectives and intermediate goals. The baseline must be calculated following a specific formula. The criteria must include separate, absolute targets for key groups of students (all, major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and LEP students). Districts may use additional criteria to add schools to, but not subtract them from, state lists of identified schools.
AYP for **districts**	The formula for AYP must be the same for districts as for schools.
Identification of **schools** for improvement	Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years must be identified for improvement under Title I.
Identification of **schools** for corrective action	Schools that do not make AYP for four years (after two years in improvement status) must be identified for corrective action.
Identification of **schools** for restructuring	Schools that do not make AYP for five and six years (after three and four years in improvement status) must be identified for restructuring (planning for restructuring for one year, then restructuring the following year).
Exiting improvement, corrective action and restructuring status	A school or district may exit from improvement, corrective action or restructuring status when it makes AYP for two consecutive years following its identification for improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

Exhibit 1 (Concluded)
Summary of Key NCLB Accountability Requirements

Topics	NCLB requirements
Identification of **districts** for improvement	Districts that do not make AYP for two consecutive years must be identified for improvement under Title I. Districts that do not make AYP for four years (after two years of improvement status) must be identified for corrective action under Title I.
District assistance for **schools** identified for improvement	Districts must provide technical assistance to identified schools to: • Develop and implement their school improvement plans. • Analyze assessment data. • Identify and implement professional development, instructional strategies, and methods of instruction derived from scientifically based research and that have proven effective in addressing the specific instructional issues that caused the school to be identified. • Analyze and revise the school budget to allocate more effectively allocate school resources to support activities most likely to increase student achievement.
Consequences for **schools** identified for improvement	Schools must develop or revise a school improvement plan. Districts must offer all students in identified schools public school choice. Districts must offer students from low-income families in identified schools supplemental educational services from an approved provider (beginning in year two of improvement).
Consequences for **schools** identified for corrective action	Consequences from years one and two of improvement continue. Districts must implement one of a series of "corrective actions" defined in the legislation.
Consequences for **schools** identified for restructuring	Districts must spend the first year planning to implement at least one of a series of school "restructuring efforts." During the second year, districts must implement the schools' restructuring plans.
Consequences for **districts** identified for improvement	Districts must develop or revise a school improvement plan. States must provide technical assistance to identified districts.
Consequences for **districts** identified for corrective action	States must implement one of a series of "corrective actions" for identified districts.
State assistance for identified **districts** and **schools**	States are required to establish a statewide system of support—including school support teams, distinguished principals and distinguished teachers—to assist schools and districts identified for improvement and corrective action as well as other districts and schools receiving Title I funds.

Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are identified for improvement and targeted for assistance and, if they continue to not make AYP, identified for increasingly rigorous interventions designed to bring about meaningful change in instruction and performance. In addition to providing more choices for parents of children attending identified schools, the law mandates corrective actions and, ultimately, the fundamental restructuring of any school that does not improve over an extended period.

NCLB accountability requirements give parents of children in schools identified for improvement a new range of options. Parents with children in Title I schools that are identified for improvement, or corrective action or restructuring, may transfer their children to a non-identified school, including a public charter school, within their district. If they do so, the district must provide transportation to eligible students, using up to an amount equal to 20 percent of the district's Title I, Part A, allocation to pay for the transportation. If funds are not available to provide transportation to all eligible students, the district must give priority to low-income low-achieving students, though all students are eligible for transfer. Students from low-income families in Title I schools that are in their second year of improvement (or corrective action or restructuring) are also eligible to receive supplemental educational services. Students in these schools may choose either school transfers or supplemental services. These options are closely linked to the public reporting provisions that give parents information on which schools in their community are reaching their goals and which are not. The choice and supplemental services requirements of the law are intended to help enhance student achievement and provide an incentive for schools in need of improvement to improve.

Overview of the Study

Data collection for the study began in 2001-02, the last year of the NCLB's predecessor, the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA), and includes the first two years in which states, districts, and schools operate under NCLB. The study is designed to address how states, districts and schools are implementing accountability provisions under Title I, the alignment between Title I and state and district accountability systems, the assistance and incentives provided to Title I schools to help them improve, and student achievement in schools identified for improvement.

Data collection for the evaluation consists of five components that span the three years of the study (additional information about the samples can be found in the appendix):

- **A survey of district Title I administrators in a nationally representative sample of approximately 1,300 districts that receive Title I funds**. Districts were stratified according to size (enrollment), degree of poverty (based on the percentage of children living in poverty within each district), and geographic region.[8]

[8] See Exhibit 2 for definitions of size and poverty strata.

- **A survey of principals in a nationally representative sample of 739 Title I schools identified for improvement in 2001-02 drawn from the sampled districts**. In 2002-03 the same schools were surveyed; however, since (1) the universe of identified schools changed and (2) this sample includes some schools that had moved out of improvement, the sample of identified schools in the analyses are no longer nationally representative of all identified Title I schools in the nation. However, surveying the same schools allows for tracking changes in these schools over time.
- **Case studies of 20 schools identified for improvement under Title I in 15 districts in five states**. The five states were selected for variation on three critical accountability dimensions: state AYP definition, alignment of Title I and the general state accountability systems, and the state process for identifying schools in need of improvement. Within states, three districts were selected: a large urban district, one suburban district, and one rural district. Within each urban district, two elementary schools identified for improvement were selected. In the rural and suburban districts, one elementary school was chosen (often the only identified school in those districts). At each case study site, district and school employees and the parents of students in identified schools were interviewed.
- **State level interviews of state administrators and analyses of state accountability systems components**. Key respondents include state Title I directors and accountability staff.

The reader should be aware that throughout the report, school survey findings are generally based on the sample of Title I schools that continued to be identified for school improvement under Title I in 2002-03 (weighted N = 3,515, unweighted N = 374). The report refers to these schools as either "schools that continued to be identified" or "continuously identified schools." In the few instances where findings apply to a larger set of schools, references to continuing identification are not made. Statistics are reported only when the unweighted sample was 20 or more. Moreover, all group differences that are reported as significant are statistically significant at $p<.05$. Details on the statistical tests and the standard errors of statistical estimates can be found in the appendix.

Overview of the Report

The findings for 2002-03 are organized around three topics related to the major accountability provisions of NCLB: (1) school improvement and the assistance provided to these schools, (2) public school choice and supplemental services, and (3) corrective actions and restructuring activities. Title I schools and districts become subject to these provisions when they are identified for improvement. But the implementation of these NCLB accountability requirements occurred within a broader accountability landscape that influences which schools are identified. As a backdrop to the findings presented in Chapters II-IV, the remainder of the Introduction describes the characteristics of schools and districts identified for improvement under Title I in 2002-03 as a basis for understanding the nature of the schools and districts that are the subject of this study.

Title I Schools and Districts Identified for Improvement

Under NCLB, schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years must be identified for improvement. The consequences outlined in NCLB for identified schools and districts were to be applied during the law's first full year, the 2002-03 school year, making identified schools and districts in 2002-03 the first to be subject to NLCB accountability requirements. Because states were developing AYP definitions following NCLB criteria during 2002-03, these definitions were not applied to identify schools and districts in that year. Instead, NCLB laid out transition rules for 2002-03: schools and districts were to be identified based on their improvement status as of Jan. 7, 2002—the day before NCLB was enacted. For example, a school in its first year of improvement as of Jan. 7, 2002, was to be identified as a school in its first year of improvement under NCLB's accountability requirements. Similarly, a school in its second year of improvement as of Jan. 7, 2002, was to be identified as a school in its second year of improvement under NCLB. The exception to these transition rules was a school in improvement on Jan. 7 that had made one year of AYP in 2000-01 and could exit improvement status if it also made AYP based on its 2001-02 assessment results. States were also permitted to identify schools for improvement in 2002-03 that had missed AYP for the first time based on their 2000-01 assessment results (and thus were not identified for improvement as of Jan. 7, 2002) and also missed AYP based on their 2001-02 assessment results. Similar transition rules applied to districts. In some cases, schools were not identified for 2002-03 until after the end of the 2002-03 school year and this study's data collection. As a result of these factors, inferences about trends in numbers of schools and districts identified for improvement should be made with caution.

Despite the transition rules, case study data at the school and district levels indicated that other issues contributed to the challenge of achieving widespread understanding of which schools were identified in 2002-03, such as changes in some state assessments, the presence in some states of parallel state accountability systems that use criteria different from AYP, and anticipated changes to state AYP definitions under NCLB.

In 2002-03, 6,000 schools were identified for improvement under Title I, representing 13 percent of all Title I schools nationwide. About 9,000 schools were identified in 2001-02.[9] The 6,000 identified Title I schools represent 13 percent of all Title I schools (see Exhibit 2). The decline in the number of Title I schools identified for improvement in 2002-03 was probably influenced by some of the factors noted above.

Slightly less than half (46 percent) of the schools that had been identified under Title I as of 2001-02 continued to be identified in 2002-03. Fifty-one percent were no longer identified, 2 percent no longer received Title I funds, and a few (fewer than 1 percent) had closed

[9] The first-year report for this study (ED 2004a) reported a smaller estimated number of identified schools for 2001-02. The difference between the earlier estimate and the one above is due to slight differences in the sample and methods for estimation, with the estimate above drawing on a more complete data set than the earlier estimate. The differences between the two estimates for 2001-02 are not statistically significant (see appendix methods notes).

or reorganized. Schools that exited improvement status did not differ from those that continued to be identified on any of the demographic variables examined: district size, school enrollment, district poverty level, school poverty level, or school level (elementary, middle, or high school).

Among districts with identified schools, a higher percentage of identified schools were located in urban and high-poverty districts in 2002-03. Sixteen percent of districts had at least one identified Title I school (see Exhibit 2). Forty-seven percent of identified schools were located in urban districts, with the remainder split between suburban and rural districts (24

Exhibit 2

Title I Schools Identified for Improvement and All Title I Schools in 2002-03, by District Size, Location and Poverty Distributions

	Estimated number of Title I schools identified for improvement	Percent of all Title I identified schools	Percent of all Title I schools	Percent of schools identified within categories
District size, by student enrollment				
Small (200 to 3,503)	1,738	29	40	9
Medium (3,504 to 10, 448)	883	15	24	8
Large (10, 449 to 37,740)	1,246	21	17	15
Very large (>37, 740)	2,135	36	19	24
Total	6,002	100	100	13
Location				
Rural	1,766	29	42	9
Suburban	1,416	24	32	9
Urban	2,820	47	25	23
Total	6,002	100	100	13
District poverty, by percent of children living in poverty				
Lowest poverty (<11 percent)	701	12	23	6
Middle poverty (11 to 22 percent)	1,682	28	36	10
Highest poverty (>22 percent)	3,618	60	41	18
Total	6,002	100	100	13

Exhibit reads: An estimated 1,738 Title I schools in small districts were identified for improvement in 2002-03, which represents 29 percent of all identified Title I schools in the nation. Small districts contained an estimated 19,188 Title I schools overall, or 40 percent of all Title I schools. In small districts, an estimated 9 percent of Title I schools (i.e., 1,738 divided by 19,188) had been identified for improvement.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. The denominator for computing the percentage of schools identified for improvement in each category (third column) is 6,002 schools (unweighted N = 3,366). The denominator for computing the percent of all Title I schools in each category (fourth column) is 47,490 schools (unweighted N = 17,487). The identification rate for schools was computed by dividing the number of identified Title I schools by the number of all Title I schools in each category. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE Eligibility Dataset. Size and poverty designations are initial stratification variables; location was obtained from the 2000 CCD.

percent and 29 percent, respectively). Identified schools were also concentrated in high-poverty districts (60 percent). However, 44 percent of districts with identified Title I schools were still located in small and medium districts with enrollments under 10,449 students (52 percent in 2001-02).

Fewer Title I districts had one or more schools identified for improvement under Title I in 2002-03 than in the previous school year. In 2002-03, 16 percent of Title I districts nationwide or an estimated 1,900 districts, had at least one identified school, as compared with 26 percent or an estimated 2,900 districts in 2001-02.[10]

The majority of Title I districts with schools identified for improvement had only one school identified. Fifty-eight percent of districts with identified schools had only one Title I school identified for improvement in 2002-03 (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3

Distribution of Identified Schools Across All Districts and Districts With Identified Title I Schools in 2002-03

Number of identified schools in districts	Percent of all districts	Percent of districts with identified schools
0	84	Not applicable
1	10	58
2	3	15
3-4	2	13
5-12	2	10
13 or more	<1	2

Exhibit reads: Eighty-four percent of districts nationwide had no Title I schools identified for improvement in 2002-03; 16 percent therefore had identified Title I schools. Among all districts, 10 percent nationwide had only one identified school; among districts with identified Title I schools, 58 percent had just one identified school.

Note: The percent of all districts is based on an N of 11,197 districts and the percent of districts with identified schools is based on an N of 1,824 districts. Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Among the districts that had at least one Title I school identified for improvement in 2002-03, 39 percent had less than a quarter of their schools identified, 26 percent had 25 to 50 percent of their schools identified, 23 percent had 50 to 75 percent of their schools identified, and 12 percent had over three-quarters of their schools identified. When measuring the concentration of identified schools within districts, it should be noted that districts with small numbers of schools

[10] The first-year report for this study (ED 2004a) reported a smaller estimated percentage of identified schools for 2001-02. The difference between the earlier estimate and the one above is due to slight differences in the sample and methods for estimation, with the estimate above drawing on a more complete data set than the earlier estimate. The difference in the two estimates for 2001-02 are not statistically significant (see appendix methods notes).

are more likely to have higher concentrations of identified schools if they have any schools at all identified for improvement. That is, a small district that has one of its two schools identified for improvement is in the same category as a large district in which 50 of its 100 schools are identified (i.e., both have 50 percent of their schools identified).

Districts with identified Title I schools in 2002-03 were more likely to be poor and urban than districts without identified schools but no different in their total enrollments. Districts with identified schools were more likely than districts *without* identified Title I schools to have a high percentage of students from low-income families (see Exhibit 4). (Forty-two

Exhibit 4

Demographic Characteristics of Districts With and Without Identified Title I Schools in 2002-03

	Districts with identified Title I schools		Districts without identified Title I schools	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
District size, by student enrollment				
Small (200 to 3,503)	1,035	57	7,503	80
Medium (3,504 to 10,448)	434	24	1,507	16
Large (10,449 to 37,740)	283	16	342	4
Very large (>37,740)	72	4	54	1
Location				
Urban	268	15	276	3
Suburban	590	32	2,457	26
Rural	967	53	6,672	71
District poverty, by percent of children living in poverty				
Lowest poverty (<11 percent)	345	19	3,627	39
Middle poverty (11 to 22 percent)	718	39	3,643	39
Highest poverty (>22 percent)	761	42	2,135	23
Total	1,824	100	9,405	100

Exhibit reads: The estimated number of districts nationwide with one or more identified Title I schools that were small districts was 1,035 which represented 57 percent of all Title I districts that had an identified Title I school in 2002-03. An estimated 7,503 districts nationwide without any identified Title I schools were small districts which represented 80 percent of all districts that did not have an identified Title I school.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: TASSIE Eligibility Dataset. District size and poverty designations are initial stratification variables; location was obtained from the 2000 CCD.

percent of districts with identified Title I schools compared with 23 percent of districts without identified Title I schools had a high percentage of students, greater than 22 percent, from low-income families.) Districts with identified Title I schools were more likely than districts *without* identified schools to be located in urban areas (15 percent vs. 3 percent) and less likely to be located in rural areas (53 percent vs. 71 percent). Districts with identified Title I schools did not differ from other districts in their total enrollment. At the same time, a high percentage of *districts with identified Title I schools* are small (59 percent) and located in rural areas (52 percent).

Across the nation, few districts were identified for improvement in 2002-03. State-level interviews indicated that 33 states had a process for identifying districts in place, seven states had not yet established such processes, three state respondents were unsure of the status of Title I district identification, and data were unavailable in seven states regarding district identification.[11] Of the states with identification systems in place, only eight had identified districts for improvement under Title I in 2002-03.

- About two-thirds (64 percent) of districts reported that their state had begun to review the progress of districts towards achieving AYP (similar to the percentage in 2001-02); 19 percent of districts were not sure whether or not the state was doing so.
- Of districts in states reviewing district AYP, the majority (84 percent) reported that their district had made AYP in 2002-03; 9 percent reported not making AYP; and 7 percent did not know whether or not they had done so.

The number of districts identified for improvement decreased from 2001-02 to 2002-03. Among the 64 percent of districts that reported that their state had begun to identify districts for improvement, only 5 percent (an estimated 373 districts nationwide) reported that they had been identified for improvement under Title I, compared with 15 percent in 2001-02. Identification for improvement did not vary by district poverty level, but there were significant differences by district size. While the total percentage of districts identified for improvement was 5 percent, among very large districts 11 percent were identified, among large districts 5 percent were identified, among medium districts 3 percent were identified, and among small districts 6 percent were identified. This is the reverse of what happened in 2001-02, when significant differences were noted in regard to district poverty level but not district size.

For accountability systems to be effective, local educators must understand the accountability criteria and must be aware of whether or not their schools have been identified for improvement, and in 2002-03 educators' and the public's understanding of what it meant to be identified for improvement was not always clear. A central principle underlying the Title I accountability system is that local educators have a clear understanding of the process used to hold schools accountable. Without such an understanding, accountability systems cannot be expected to have an impact.

[11] Hawaii is a unique case in that the SEA is also the district, and no system was in place for the SEA to identify itself. (The same is true of the District of Columbia, although it is not a state.)

In 2002-03, just over three-fourths (76 percent) of district administrators reported that they understood all or most of the elements of the AYP definition for Title I schools. However, principals' reports on their schools' improvement status were not always consistent with the state's or district's categorization of the school.

- In 30 percent of the continuously identified Title I schools, principals were not aware that their schools were identified for improvement in 2002-03. In 2001-02, 41 percent of principals in identified Title I schools reported that they were not identified for improvement or did not know if they had been identified for improvement.
- In 19 percent of schools that were no longer identified, principals reported that the school was still identified for improvement in 2002-03. (This was not an issue in 2001-02 since all of the schools responding to the survey were identified for improvement.)

Case study data provided some examples of the confusion caused by pending transitions to new AYP definitions under NCLB and assessment systems as they existed in 2002-03. For example, Maryland allowed districts to apply local criteria to assess schools' AYP as the state transitioned to a new AYP formula so the definitions were not consistent across districts. In addition, the state's transition from one assessment to another also caused some confusion about AYP measures. In two large districts in Maryland, most school staff in identified schools generally knew that their school had been identified, but they were less certain about AYP elements and how the school could exit improvement status. When asked about the school's performance target, one principal stated, "Who knows what it is. … We don't know what measure we are going to be judged on…at some level it doesn't really matter, we know what we need to do."

II School Improvement and District Assistance in Identified Schools

To achieve the goal that all students reach proficiency by 2013-14, NCLB calls for greater accountability, coupled with increased assistance to schools in which too many children are not meeting state standards for proficiency in reading and mathematics. NCLB lays out specific steps that states and districts must take to assist schools in need of improvement. States must establish statewide systems of support that provide assistance directly to schools. Districts must provide ongoing technical assistance as schools develop and implement their school plans. In particular, districts must help schools analyze student achievement data, develop plans for improvement, revise their budgets so that resources are effectively allocated to the activities most likely to increase student academic achievement, implement professional development, and put in place instructional practices that have shown evidence of effectiveness. Schools, in turn, are expected to develop and implement two-year plans that provide road maps for their efforts to improve curriculum and instruction and raise student achievement.

In 2002-03, schools in the study sample that continued to be identified for improvement under Title I ("continuously identified schools") were engaged in multiple improvement activities, and many districts and states provided technical assistance to help these schools meet their goals. However, during the 2002-03 school year not all states and districts had school support systems in place, as called for under NCLB, and only a fraction of identified schools reported receiving such assistance.

As in 2001-02, both identified schools and their districts emphasized school planning, looked at achievement data, and matched curriculum to standards and assessments in 2002-03. These activities are consistent with those promoted by NCLB and they lay the groundwork for changes inside classrooms, but they do not substitute for such changes. Many schools had begun new programs, especially in reading, but far fewer had received professional development and support for their efforts. Improvement efforts to this point were due primarily to continuing state and district efforts that (1) began before 2002-03, the year that NCLB went into effect, and (2) applied to all schools or all low-performing schools, not just those formally identified for improvement. The majority of districts were providing some form of assistance to identified schools, but many, especially small districts, did not provide any additional assistance or dedicate extra staff to support school improvement.

This section elaborates on these findings regarding systems of support, looking first at which entities provided and received support and then at the focus of assistance and improvement under which findings on planning and data use, new curricula, and professional development are described. The last two subsections report how districts targeted assistance and support and the variations in assistance efforts by district characteristics.

State and District Systems of School Support

NCLB assigns responsibility to both states and districts for supporting improvement activities in identified schools. The law requires that states develop systems of school support that provide assistance to schools identified for improvement and schools in corrective action

and restructuring status. These support systems must include school support teams that work with identified schools to design, implement, and monitor school improvement plans, as well as with distinguished teachers and principals recruited from schools that have been especially successful in improving student achievement. Because districts also have special responsibility for providing assistance to identified schools under NCLB, they are another important source of support and assistance.

Most states provided some type of assistance to their identified schools in 2002-03; however, more than a third of the states had not organized support teams or distinguished educators to provide assistance to identified schools as required under NCLB. Twenty-three of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia reported that they were operating school support teams, as required under NCLB (see Exhibit 5). Typically, these school support teams assisted schools by conducting needs assessments, developing school improvement plans, and monitoring the implementation of those plans. Nineteen of 51 states reported that they had assigned distinguished educators to schools. Like school support teams, distinguished educators typically assisted with the development of school plans but sometimes worked closely with teachers on improving instruction. Twenty-eight states provided assistance to identified schools either through school support teams, or through distinguished teachers, or through both. In more than a third of states (19), however, these two types of assistance were not available to any schools.

Exhibit 5

State Reports of Assistance Provided to Identified Schools

	Number of states reporting		
	Assistance provided	Assistance not provided	Data not available
School support team	23	24	4
Distinguished educator	19	26	6
Other types of assistance	39	6	6

Exhibit reads: Twenty-three states reported that they assigned school support teams to at least some identified schools. Twenty-four states reported that they did not provide this type of assistance. In four states, these data were not available because the respondent did not know or the state did not respond to requests for an interview. Sample includes 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Source: TASSIE state survey.

Thirty-nine states reported that they also provided other types of assistance to their identified schools (see Exhibit 5). These other types of assistance most often included technical assistance to identified schools, professional development, and assistance from regional agencies. Typically this assistance was offered via phone consultation or in regional training events, rather than in-person and on-site, as was the case with school support teams and distinguished educators. For example, Arizona's state department of education hosted a three-day workshop on using test score data to develop school improvement plans for school improvement teams from across the state. Maryland offered two training sessions on closing the achievement gap for minority students to teams from identified schools.

NCLB requires that, at a minimum, school support teams, distinguished educators and other types of assistance be provided to identified schools in each state. Though most states (46) had in place at least one of the required elements of a statewide system of support in 2002-03, very few had all of the required elements in place. Twelve states reported that they had provided assistance to identified schools via all three elements: school support teams, distinguished educators, and other forms of assistance.

The fraction of identified schools receiving assistance from school support teams and distinguished educators in 2002-03 varied across states, as did the intensity of support provided which in part was based on the level of school need. Only 16 of the 23 states that had school support teams reported on the number of schools served. In seven states, either the state did not keep records of the number of schools served or the respondent did not have access to this information. Of those states that did report on the number of schools served, 11 indicated that school support teams reached all or nearly all of the identified schools in the state (between 75 and 100 percent). Five states reported, however, that their school support teams reached fewer than half of identified schools. Distinguished educators appear to have reached a smaller fraction of schools in many states. Specifically, 6 of 11 states reported that distinguished educators reached fewer than half of identified schools. Five states reported that distinguished educators reached more than half of identified schools. In 6 of the 19 states that had distinguished educators, information about the number of schools served was not available.

In some states, school support teams and distinguished educators were assigned to identified schools to provide intensive support and assistance in developing, implementing, and monitoring schools' improvement plans; in other states, support from these sources was more limited. In Louisiana, for example, the state worked with districts to select and train District Assistance Teams (DATs), which visited schools throughout the year to provide assistance with planning, monitor the implementation of the plan, and provide quarterly status reports to the district and state. Louisiana supplemented DATs with curriculum specialists who spent up to a semester in identified schools, and distinguished educators who spent a full year in corrective action schools. Washington's Focused Assistance Program supported a facilitator in each participating school who worked one-third time with the school to develop and implement an improvement plan (see Exhibit 6). In other states, for example, Arizona, external evaluators helped with the development of school plans, but made fewer trips and spent much less time in schools.

In 2002-03, grant programs funded by Title I school improvement allocations and other state and federal funding streams were another key element in state systems of school support. The majority of districts with identified schools (57 percent) reported that their state provided identified schools with grants for school improvement. For example, Michigan allocated Title I school improvement funds to its lowest-performing Title I schools, known within the state as "intensive" schools. Schools applied for grants, which were limited to spending on professional development. Identified schools in one large urban district in Michigan received $75,000-95,000 in funding for new professional development. Other states encouraged identified schools to apply for Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) and Reading First funds to secure additional resources for improvement activities.

Exhibit 6
Washington's Focused Assistance Program

In Washington during the 2002-03 school year, the Focused Assistance program provided intensive support for school improvement planning and implementation to schools identified for improvement under Title I. First, an educational audit team visited participating Title I identified schools for three to four days to conduct a needs assessment. The audit teams were made up of five to six people including: a team leader (typically a former administrator selected for writing and communication skills), a superintendent, a staff member from the local education service district, an experienced audit team member, and a district or state staff person who has experience with the student population at the school. This visit concluded with the presentation of a written assessment of the schools strengths and weaknesses. Second, the state provided a facilitator to work with the school to develop a school improvement plan based on the findings of the audit team. Facilitators were paid for 78 days during the year, most of which were spent at the school site; schools also received money for professional development through the program. Participation in the program was voluntary and was limited to schools that had been identified for improvement under Title I. As of 2002-03, the program had reached 38 of the 50 identified schools in the state, in 31 districts.

Although some states had established mechanisms for providing support to identified schools, many identified schools turned first to districts for assistance in mounting meaningful improvement efforts. District assistance to Title I identified schools included placing additional staff in schools to support teacher development; and various kinds of consultants, similar to the school support teams and distinguished educators operated by states, who provided consultation and other support for data analysis, planning, and budgeting.

Assigning additional school-level staff to identified schools was a key district strategy for supporting school improvement reported in 2002-03. Most districts with identified schools reported that they provided those schools with some form of additional staffing, in addition to the standard complement of classroom teachers. For example, nearly three-quarters of districts with identified schools reported that they assigned additional staff to support instructional improvement, and the same number of districts reported that they assigned additional staff to provide additional instruction to students. One third of districts with identified schools reported that they assigned those schools additional full-time staff whose primary responsibility was to support teacher professional development. The majority of districts (70 percent) also reported that they provide Title I identified schools with additional professional development or special access to professional development resources.

Among continuously identified schools, 21 percent reported that they had been assigned full-time school-level staff to support teacher development. Just over half (58 percent) reported that they had received additional professional development or special access to professional development resources. A description of district-sponsored professional development and of the role of these special school-based staff follows in the section on professional development below.

Most, but not all, districts provided on-site assistance to their identified schools in the form of school support teams, distinguished teachers, or principal mentors. Like some states, some districts had assigned teams of administrators and teachers to assist identified schools with the development of school improvement plans, use of data, and other activities related to instructional improvement. Slightly more than half of districts (52 percent) reported

that they had fielded school support teams for identified schools. Nearly a third (29 percent) reported that they had assigned a principal coach or mentor to identified schools; 15 percent of districts had assigned distinguished teachers (see Exhibit 7). Overall, nearly two-thirds of districts reported that they provided identified schools with at least one of these forms of on-site assistance. In addition, districts reported that they provided school support teams, distinguished teachers, and principal mentors to identified schools much more often than states did.

Exhibit 7

District Reports of Assistance Provided to Identified Schools, Among Districts With Identified Schools

	Percent of districts reporting assistance provided	
	Assistance provided by district	Assistance provided by state
School support team	52	32
Principal mentor or coach	29	10
Distinguished teacher	15	8
Any of these forms of assistance (i.e., school support team, principal mentor, or distinguished teacher)	61	39

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools, 52 percent of districts reported that they provided school support teams to identified schools; 32 percent reported that the state provided school support team to identified schools in the district.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

District-sponsored on-site assistance could include a wide range of activities. For example, one large suburban district assigned an instructional specialist to visit each Title I school once a week to monitor school improvement plans, conduct parent outreach, and monitor the use of Title I funds at the school. In Louisiana, the DATs described above visited schools at least quarterly to help with gathering and interpreting of data to create a school improvement plan, using tools developed for this purpose by the state.

Other case study districts assigned district staff to work with identified schools, in addition to their regular responsibilities. For example, one rural district assigned each of its curriculum specialists to serve on the school improvement team of one school in the county. Other districts created new lines of reporting and supervision for principals of low-performing and identified schools. Principals and school improvement team members from these schools met once or twice a month with district leadership teams, assistant superintendents, or chief academic officers, to review school improvement plans and progress on implementation of those plans. Reports from case study schools suggest wide variations in how much assistance schools received as well as whether the assistance was perceived as helpful by school staff.

Many continuously identified schools had no access to state or district on-site assistance, either because they were in districts and states that did not provide it or because states or districts did not serve all of their identified schools. Among schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03, one-quarter reported that they had received help from a school support team within the last year and fewer still reported help from a principal mentor or coach or from a distinguished teacher (see Exhibit 8). Altogether, slightly more than a third of continuously identified schools reported that they received one or more of these forms of assistance, whereas nearly two-thirds reported that they had received none.

Exhibit 8
School Reports of On-site Assistance,
Among Schools That Continued to Be Identified for Improvement

	Percent of schools reporting that they received assistance		
	All schools	Schools in districts where the district provides assistance	Schools in districts where the state provides assistance
School support team	25	35	32
Principal mentor or coach	20	39	4
Distinguished teacher	13	2	**
Any of these forms of assistance (i.e., school support team, principal mentor, or distinguished teacher)	38	48	37

Exhibit reads: Twenty-five percent of all schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 reported that they received help from a school support team. Where the district provided school support teams, 35 percent of schools reported that they had received help from one. Where the state provided school support teams, 32 percent of schools reported receiving help from one.

Notes: ** indicates there are too few cases in the cell to generate a reliable estimate. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE school survey.

Even when continuously identified schools were located in districts or states that provided some form of on-site assistance, the proportion reporting that they received that assistance was still low. Among schools in districts that fielded school support teams, only a third reported that they received assistance from a team (see Exhibit 8). Similarly, only a third of the continuously identified schools located in *states* that fielded support teams reported that they received assistance from a team. Although a majority of districts and states offered school support teams, distinguished teachers, and principal mentors to at least some of their identified schools, the evidence suggests that these forms of on-site assistance were, in many cases, not available to every identified school. In several case study sites, districts or states had targeted on-site assistance to a subset of the lowest-performing identified schools, or to a group of schools that

had volunteered to participate in a school improvement initiative. In states or districts like these, some identified schools did not receive the assistance that was provided to others.

A small number of identified schools had no access to school support teams, distinguished teachers, or principal mentors because they were located in jurisdictions where neither the district nor the state provided these types of support for school improvement. For example, 17 percent of identified schools had no access to school support teams because neither their district nor their state provided them. Thirty-four percent of principals had no access to mentors because neither the district nor the state provided them. Nine percent of identified schools were located in districts where neither the state nor the district offered any of these forms of assistance.

Assistance from school support teams was provided to fewer continuously identified schools in 2002-03 than the previous year. In 2002-03, slightly more than a quarter (28 percent) of the principals in continuously identified schools in the longitudinal sample reported that they had received help from a school support team, down from 46 percent in 2001-02. This drop is surprising, because these schools had been identified for one additional year, and therefore should have been in even greater need of assistance. The percentage of principals reporting that they had received help from a mentor or coach remained unchanged, but low, as did the percentage reporting that they had received help from a distinguished teacher. In several case study sites, increasing budget deficits and pressure to trim expenditures by cutting central office staff had forced districts to cut both the number of staff assigned to serve identified schools and the number of schools served.

Focus of District Assistance and School Improvement Efforts

School improvement efforts and district assistance focused overwhelmingly on increasing the use of achievement data and matching curriculum and instruction with standards and assessment. Consistent with NCLB's expectation that schools and districts use data to identify students who are not on track to reach standards and to assess the effectiveness of existing instructional programs, 77 percent of districts with at least one identified school reported a major focus on increasing the use of student achievement data to inform instruction and school improvement (see Exhibit 9). NCLB also holds districts and schools accountable for student achievement on assessments that are aligned with academic content standards. Eighty-six percent of districts with identified schools placed a major focus on aligning curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments.

Exhibit 9
Percent of Districts Placing a Major Focus on Strategies for Improving Low-Performing Schools, Among Districts With Identified Schools

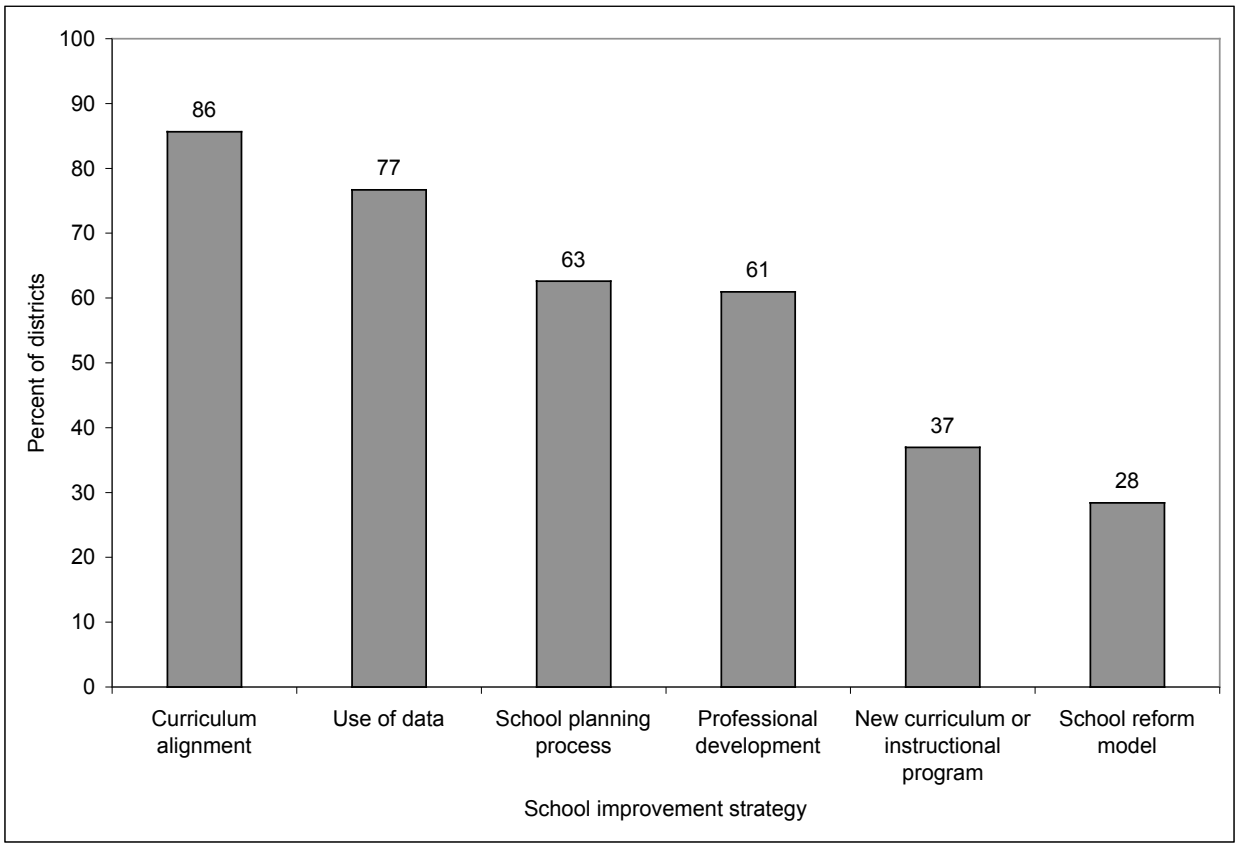


Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools, 86 percent reported that matching curriculum and instruction with standards, assessments, or both, was a major focus of district resources for low-performing schools.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Continuously identified schools generally relied on the same improvement strategies in both 2001-02 and 2002-03. The vast majority of schools had a written school improvement plan (93 percent), used data to inform their improvement efforts (85 percent), took steps to align curriculum to standards and assessments (80 percent), and reported some teacher collaboration (75 percent).[12] Smaller percentages of schools reported adoption of new curricula *and* reform models because a given school was more likely to adopt only one of these (see Exhibit 10). Compared with 2001-02, more schools used data to inform their improvement efforts in 2002-03 (85 percent compared with 75 percent); otherwise, use of strategies did not change.

The following subsections elaborate the above findings on: school planning and uses of data, curriculum alignment, new curricula and school reform models, and professional development.

[12] The definition of "teacher collaboration" as a school improvement strategy is described in the appendix.

Exhibit 10

School Improvement Strategies,
Among Schools That Continued to Be Identified for Improvement

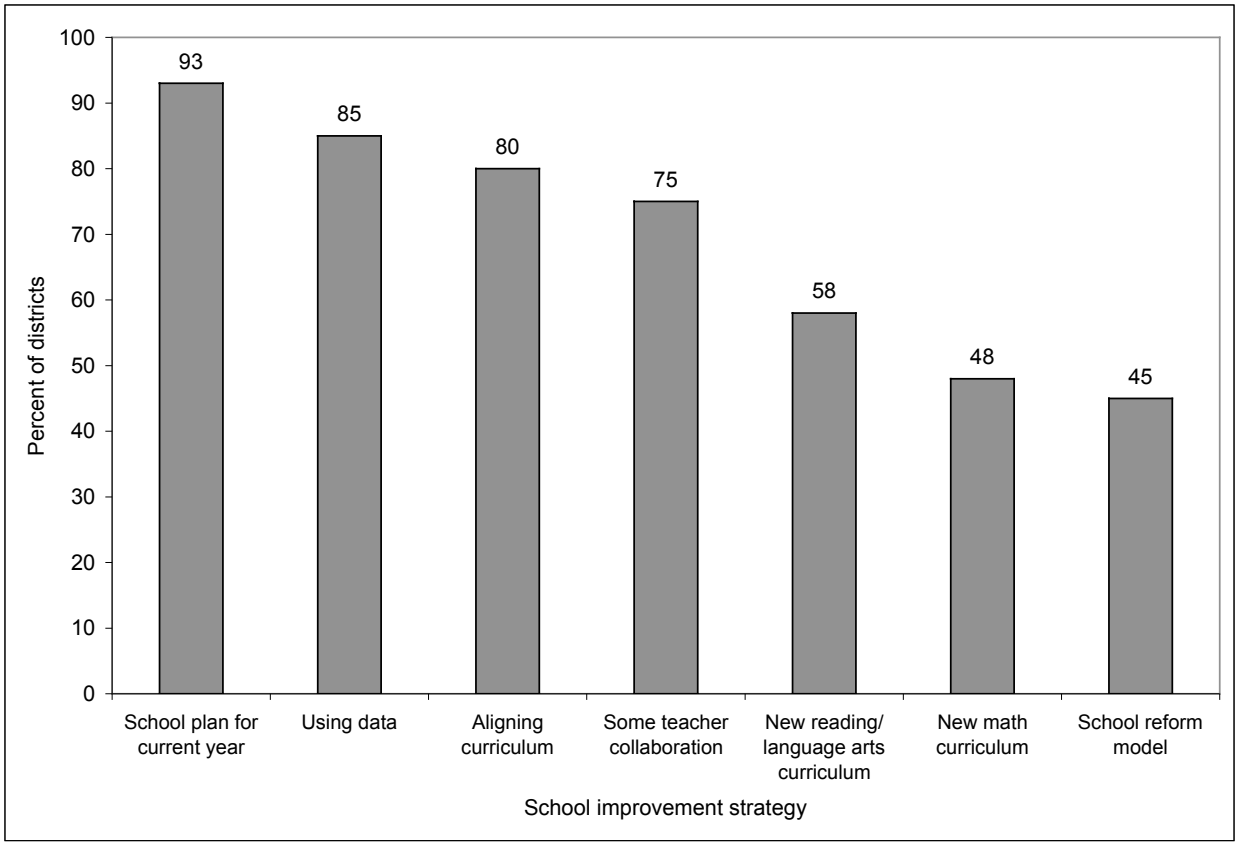


Exhibit Reads: Among schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03, 93 percent reported having a written school plan.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE school survey.

School Planning and Use of Data

NCLB requires the development or revision of school improvement plans designed to address the problems that caused the school to be identified. In addition to requiring school plans, NCLB calls for districts to assist schools in: (1) analyzing student achievement data; (2) identifying research-based professional development and instructional strategies; and (3) allocating their resources more effectively.

Almost all continuously identified schools developed school improvement plans and received district assistance consistent with NCLB requirements; however, only about half of those schools monitored progress toward their plans' goals in 2002-03. Consistent with NCLB requirements, nearly all districts with identified Title I schools reported supporting schools in the development of school plans. Districts reported that they assigned staff to provide

Title I schools identified for improvement with three specific types of assistance called for under the law: help with analyzing data (94 percent); help with identifying research-based improvement strategies (89 percent); and help with allocating resources more effectively (72 percent). In addition, most districts had provided other types of support for school planning and data use, including help identifying research-based strategies, additional data analysis, and help with monitoring progress toward goals.

In many cases, the range of assistance provided by districts with regard to planning and data use was extensive. Nearly half (44 percent) of districts with identified schools reported that they provided schools with technical assistance in all 10 of the areas related to data use and planning included in the TASSIE district survey.[13] Only 13 percent of districts reported that they provided assistance on 5 of those 10 items or fewer.

As required under NCLB, most continuously identified schools (93 percent) had written school improvement plans for the 2002-03 school year. Many schools made frequent reference to their improvement plan and used data to monitor progress toward goals and to revise the plan on a regular schedule, while others did not. For example, slightly more than half of principals (56 percent) reported that educators at their school were monitoring progress toward goals established in their school plans *at least quarterly* in 2002-03—a reduction from 75 percent in 2001-02. About a quarter (23 percent) reported monitoring progress two or three times a year and another 23 percent reported monitoring their progress annually or once every two years.

Almost all (96 percent) continuously identified schools reported using their improvement plans to design or choose professional development, 83 percent reported using their plan to select and implement new curricula and instructional programs, and 51 percent reported using their plan to select and implement a school reform model. However, case study schools suggest these figures likely reflected post-hoc rationales for choices about professional development and curriculum. In these schools, both school plans and decisions about professional development and curriculum were influenced by the same forces, such as district mandates and eligibility requirements for grants.

The extent to which the development and use of the school plan were collective activities also varied by school. In some of the case study schools, all educators were aware of the school plan and the actions being taken to accomplish its goals. For example, the schools in one urban district had school improvement teams and committees that met monthly, looked at data, and revised plans accordingly. In others, only a few teachers were aware of the contents of the plan.

A majority of continuously identified schools had access to disaggregated achievement data, but most principals did not identify disaggregated data as among the most influential sources of data for school planning. NCLB requires schools to be held accountable for the performance of subpopulations of students; as a result, access to disaggregated student achievement data is needed. Roughly two-thirds of principals of identified schools reported access to data disaggregated by special populations such as limited English

[13] Survey items about district support for planning and data use were based on two questions that asked about the types of technical assistance provided to schools and whether professional development addressed topics about data use. The 10 items in these two questions are listed in the appendix.

proficient and special education students, or disaggregated by demographic characteristics such as poverty level and race or ethnicity. However, only about a quarter of these principals reported that these data had served as among the most influential sources of data for school planning in 2002-03.

Schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 were increasingly focused on the use of student achievement data to inform instruction and school improvement. The absence of attention to written school plans did not signify lack of attention to data. The percent of schools reporting that they placed a major focus on the use of student achievement data rose from 75 percent in 2001-02 to 86 percent in 2002-03. This increase was consistent with districts' continuing focus on the use of data (see Exhibit 9). As the case study schools illustrated, schools were using data in multiple ways, from schoolwide and grade-level planning, to diagnosing the needs of individual students; however, diagnostic uses received less attention.

The case study schools suggest that the use of diagnostic data for instructional decisions occurred but required a set of conditions that were not widespread: the availability of useful diagnostic assessments, district leadership and support, and the knowledge of how to tailor instruction on the basis of the results of the data (see Exhibit 11 for a case of exemplary data use). NCLB calls on districts to administer assessments that are useful in assessing the progress of low-achieving students and in diagnosing their learning needs. Most districts and a majority of schools reported availability of assessments other than annual tests:

- Principals at more than half (56 percent) of the schools that continued to be identified reported that they had been provided with classroom-embedded assessments that aligned with state standards.
- Most districts with identified schools (88 percent) reported administering local assessments.
- Of these districts, 89 percent reported doing so in order to identify students who needed tutoring or other special interventions, and 92 percent reported doing so in order to inform instructional decisions.

Exhibit 11
School Uses of Data

One case study school in a suburban district with overall low poverty exemplified extensive use of data. In fact, the school's primary improvement strategy rested on close attention to many types of assessment data: classroom assessments, quarterly district assessments, the state assessment, and a nationally normed standardized test. Teachers identified students performing below grade level and matched those students with interventions (usually additional instruction) designed to address their particular weaknesses. Grade level teams met quarterly with resource teachers and the reading and math support teachers to go over data for each child. With only a small percentage of low-performing students, they were able to discuss each student who was not making progress and determine whether a new intervention strategy was needed. Behind this activity was a district requirement that schools develop individual student support plans for every student below grade level. The recordkeeping was helped by the district's decision to give networked laptop computers to teachers who used them to keep progress reports and student support plans, as well as grade books.

Curriculum Alignment

Aligning curriculum with academic content standards and assessments was an increasingly common focus of district assistance and school improvement. In addition to focusing on the use of student achievement data to inform improvement efforts, most districts also reported that matching curriculum and instruction with standards, assessments, or both, was a major focus of district resources in 2002-03 (see Exhibit 9). In fact, among districts responding to the survey in both years, the percent characterizing curriculum alignment as a major focus area rose in 2002-03 (to 86 percent, from 73 percent in 2001-02). Similarly, 80 percent of principals of continuously identified schools reported a major focus on curriculum alignment in 2002-03, similar to reports from the previous year.

Consistent with this focus, almost all districts (91 percent) reported that they had sponsored professional development for identified schools on the topic of ensuring alignment between curriculum and instruction and standards (see Exhibit 15). Similarly, 79 percent of principals of continuously identified schools reported providing professional development aimed at ensuring alignment, and 55 percent of these principals identified curriculum alignment as one of three key areas for professional development.

Districts and schools also pointed to a range of support provided by districts on curriculum alignment, in addition to professional development (see below):

- Sixty-nine percent of continuously identified schools reported that their state or district had provided curriculum guides with standards, frameworks, and pacing sequences.
- Fifty-five percent of continuously identified schools reported that they had been provided with documents mapping out the alignment of required textbooks and instructional programs with standards.
- A majority of districts provided each of the following kinds of support for alignment of curriculum and instruction with state or district standards: professional development on aligning curriculum with state or district standards and assessments, local content standards, curriculum guides, model lesson plans, aligning textbooks and instructional materials with standards and assessment, and regular checks of standards implementation in classrooms. Twenty-nine percent of districts reported that they provided all or nearly all of the types of support for alignment included on the TASSIE district survey (at least 9 out of 10 items).[14] Nearly three-quarters of districts (73 percent) provided at least a moderate range of support for curriculum alignment (at least 6 out of 10 items).

In the case study schools, teachers cited benefits from curriculum alignment, but many reported inadequate time and support for translating alignment efforts into instructional change (see Exhibit 12). In addition, educators struggled with the need to align their curriculum with

[14] Survey items about district support for curriculum alignment were based on two questions that asked about the types of technical assistance provided to schools and whether professional development addressed topics about curriculum alignment. The 10 items in these two questions are listed in the appendix.

multiple sets of standards and assessments. Some schools operated under both district and state standards, and their students took a combination of state and nationally normed tests as well.

Exhibit 12
Challenges of Curriculum Alignment

Efforts to align curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments pose challenges to districts and schools. In Washington, for example, schools aligned to the state standards, the state's criterion-referenced assessment, and a norm-referenced test. One district created documents available on CD-ROMs using commercial software that were described as linking every competency and objective at every grade level to one or more of these standards and assessments. However, few teachers used these materials—in large part because they were implementing highly structured reading programs that left little room to make adjustments. Another reason alignment documents and activities were limited in their effect on instruction was that they were not accompanied by adequate support. In another district, a teacher noted the difference between general discussions of alignment at the district level versus knowing how to meet the objectives: "Last week a district person was out talking about standards and how to meet them with different parts of the curriculum, but it's more helpful to have that conversation in a grade level meeting. We need more supports to facilitate conversations about how to reach our objectives."

New Curricula and School Reform Models

NCLB charges districts with assisting schools in identifying and implementing instructional strategies that will strengthen the core academic subjects in the school and that have proven effective in addressing the issues that caused the school to be identified. School plans and curriculum alignment represent first steps on the path to instructional improvement in the classroom. Adopting new instructional programs and providing related professional development are additional strategies that are often used to make changes that are one step closer to the classroom and student learning.

In 2002-03, many schools were adopting new curricula, using school reform models or adding a variety of new supplemental instructional programs. Almost three-fifths of principals (58 percent) reported they had adopted a new language arts curriculum in the previous three years, and close to half (48 percent) of continuously identified schools had adopted a new mathematics curriculum in the previous three years. In many cases, these adoptions had been in response to district requirements that increasingly required all schools to adopt specific language arts or mathematics programs. In fact, 53 percent of districts reported requiring identified schools to adopt a new language arts curriculum and 40 percent required adoption of a new mathematics curriculum.

The case study sites and school survey data suggest a trend among districts in centralizing decisions about curriculum and professional development to ensure alignment with state standards and assessments—decisions that previously had been delegated to individual schools during a decade characterized by school-site management. For example, one urban district leader characterized the district as recentralizing in order to provide low-performing schools with "higher yield strategies" (e.g., research-based instructional strategies) and to ensure common curriculum and assessments across schools. Of those schools implementing a new

language arts or mathematics curriculum, half (51 percent and 49 percent, respectively) reported that their district required them to do so.

Many schools that continued to be identified (45 percent) were also using school reform models. Use of a school reform model was rarely (19 percent) prompted by a district requirement.

Principals of identified schools cited reasons of instructional consistency for adopting new curricula, not Title I identification. Taking NCLB's call for aligned state standards, assessments, and accountability systems one step further, schools were adopting new curricula as a means of aligning their curricula with academic content standards and assessments and of standardizing curriculum across classrooms. As the reason for new curriculum adoptions, roughly three-fourths of principals in identified schools that adopted new language arts or mathematics curricula cited the need to support instruction consistent with state or district standards and assessments and to establish consistency across classrooms and/or grade levels. In contrast, fewer than one-fourth reported that Title I identification played a role in adopting new language arts or mathematics curricula.

Of the continuously identified schools that adopted new reading or mathematics curricula or school reform models, most reported emphasizing related professional development or receiving a minimum level of related district assistance; fewer reported receiving both.[15] For example, of the almost 6 in 10 schools (58 percent) that continued to be identified and reported adopting a new language arts program in the last three years (i.e., between 2000-01 and 2002-03), 85 percent reported either emphasizing related professional development or receiving a minimum level of related district assistance (see Exhibit 13). At the same time, less than half (43 percent) reported receiving both. Similarly, almost three-quarters (71 percent) of schools adopting a new mathematics curriculum (48 percent) reported either emphasizing related professional development or receiving a minimum level of related district assistance while 11 percent reported receiving both.

Although fewer than half of the continuously identified schools reported implementing new mathematics curricula and only two in five of those reported emphasizing related professional development, the frequency with which schools reported emphasizing professional development in mathematics increased significantly in 2002-03. The percentage of principals who reported placing emphasis on professional development in mathematics started low in 2001-02 (35 percent of those who reported that educators participated in mathematics professional development) but increased to 52 percent in 2002-03. In contrast, in both 2001-02 and 2002-03, the percentage of principals who reported emphasizing professional development in language arts was high (78 and 80 percent, respectively).

The gap between the percent of schools implementing new curricula and those receiving related professional development, assistance, or both, suggests that schools may not have had access to all the help they needed to put new instructional programs in place. Adopting a new curriculum can be an important step; unless the instructional strategies and materials embodied

[15] The definitions and scales underlying "emphasizing related professional development" and "receiving a minimum level of related district assistance" are described in the appendix.

in the curriculum are put into practice, however, the curriculum is not likely to be effective. The case studies indicate the importance of multiple sources of assistance (including professional development, on-site support, and other district or state assistance) to fully implement new curricula.

Exhibit 13

Of Continuously Identified Schools Engaged in Different Improvement Activities, Percent That Emphasized Related Professional Development or Received a Minimum Level of Related District Assistance

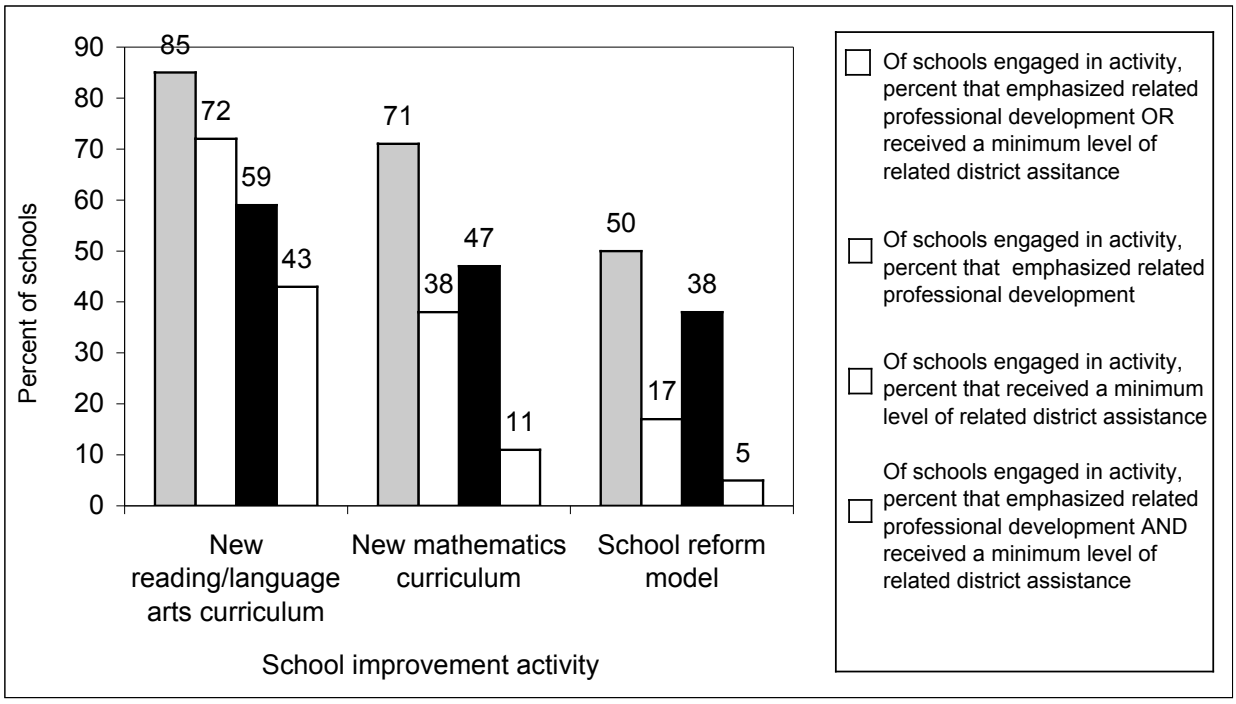


Exhibit reads: Among schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 and reported implementing a new language arts program, 85 percent reported emphasizing related professional development *or* receiving a minimum level of related district assistance, 72 percent reported emphasizing related professional development; 59 percent reported receiving a minimum level of related district assistance; and. 43 percent reported emphasizing related professional development *and* receiving a minimum level of related district assistance.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE school survey.

Many continuously identified schools adopted more than one new program and often layered them on top of existing programs, raising issues of how to cope with multiple new programs and how best to mesh the new with the old. Educators at identified schools were dealing with many new initiatives at the same time. In addition to learning to use data to inform instruction and aligning instruction with academic content standards, teachers were also faced with adopting more than one new curriculum simultaneously, often in addition to a school reform model. Thirty-two percent of schools that continued to be identified had adopted *both* new language arts and new mathematics programs in the last three years, and 48 percent of schools had been implementing either two new instructional programs (in mathematics *and*

language arts) or a new instructional program (mathematics *or* language arts) in combination with a school reform model.

Often, in the case study sites, new programs were added to existing programs rather than replacing them, unless it was a new district adoption or a program supported by a major grant. In some cases, mandated new programs conflicted with programs already in place. For example, schools in one urban district had been implementing Success For All for five years, when the district asked the schools to implement its new reading framework representing a different approach. The case studies also showed that some schools chose to forego grants to support new programs to avoid such conflicts. For example, two case study schools in different districts and states declined opportunities for Reading First grants because they were committed to other reading programs.

The case study schools provided many examples of schools implementing multiple new core and supplemental programs at the same time. As Exhibit 14 illustrates, a school can be overburdened by multiple new initiatives that may run at cross-purposes. When schools try to launch many programs, they can lose focus and do a poor job with all of them, instead of focusing on a major strategy directed to the most important problem. Standards-based reform and NCLB intend to help focus school improvement efforts but, under pressure for solutions, districts and schools often attempt to solve problems by adding more and more programs.

Exhibit 14
Program Proliferation

In the quest to help low-performing schools improve, an unintended consequence is a proliferation of instructional programs in schools, each with its own training and materials. One of several examples encountered in the case studies was a school in a large urban district which, under a Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grant, had been implementing a self-paced skills training program in language arts and mathematics which the district was obligated to continue for two years in order to continue the grant. The school was also implementing the district-adopted curriculum in reading (Harcourt Brace) and in mathematics (Quest). In addition, the district had asked the school to choose between Success For All and Direct Instruction for next year—a requirement for all schools that might be designated Corrective Action. The school was also implementing Project READ, another district supported reading program and DEEP, a hands-on approach to mathematics. During the past year, third- and fourth-grade teachers also received InTech training for using computers in the classroom.

Professional Development

As part of providing technical assistance, districts are expected to help identified schools select and implement professional development. They do this through districtwide professional development sessions and through allocating resources to the school site including the provision of on-site assistance designed to support teacher development.

Almost all districts provided identified schools with some type of professional development in 2002-03; however, the amount of that professional development, its relevance to instructional improvement, and its quality varied greatly across districts and even schools within districts. As Exhibit 15 illustrates, among districts with identified schools,

95 percent reported that they supported professional development in language arts instruction in identified schools. High percentages were also reported for aligning instruction with standards (91 percent), analyzing achievement data (84 percent), and mathematics instruction (80 percent).

Exhibit 15

District Reports of Types of Professional Development Provided to Identified Schools, Among Districts With Identified Schools

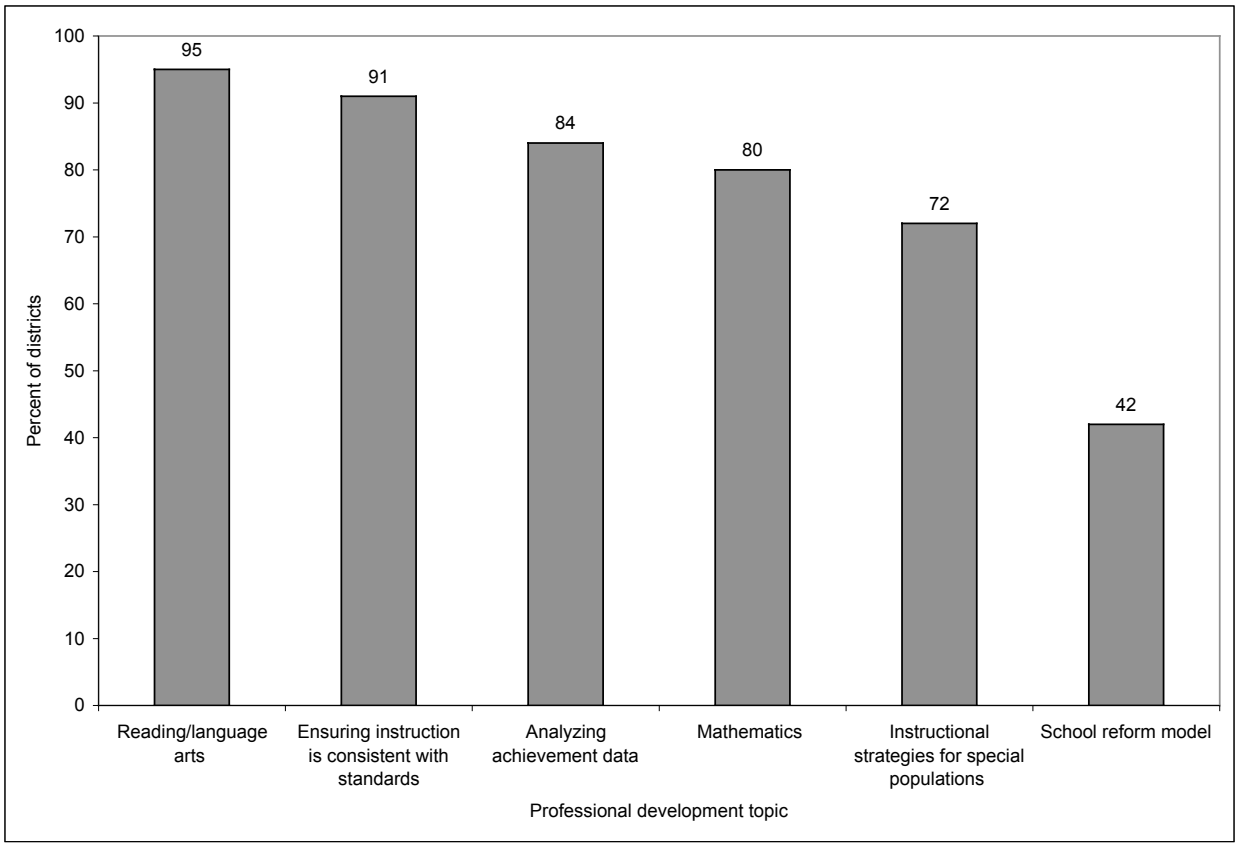


Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools, 95 percent reported that they supported professional development in reading/language arts instruction in identified schools.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Principals of continuously identified schools reported similar figures: 95 percent reported receiving professional development in language arts instruction, 80 percent in analyzing achievement data, 79 percent in aligning curriculum with standards, and 74 percent in mathematics instruction. However, these figures do not reflect the amount of professional development, its relevance, or its quality.

Among case study sites, districts differed in the amount and quality of professional development they provided as perceived by teachers. In one case study school, the district had assigned a full-time staff developer to the school with considerable expertise in mathematics curriculum and instruction. Her formal and informal professional development for teachers,

including after-school sessions and feedback in the classroom, was deemed highly valuable. In contrast, in another case study school, professional development on the school's new reading curriculum was provided each Friday afternoon by two resource teachers who had no particular expertise in the curriculum. Teachers judged the sessions as poorly organized and ineffective. The case study schools also suggest a positive relationship between the intensity and quality of professional development and support for instructional change on the one hand, and teachers' enthusiasm for and commitment to making changes.

In general, additional full-time staff assigned to schools to support teacher development was a highly valued resource in the case study schools. Nationwide, only a third (33 percent) of districts with identified schools reported that such schools had been assigned such support staff. Although these staff play an important role in school improvement, **fewer than a quarter (23 percent) of continuously identified schools had been assigned full-time staff whose specific job was to support teacher development**.

These additional staff went by a variety of names—improvement facilitators, instructional support teachers, literacy coaches, mentor teachers—and assisted in a variety of ways to develop and implement school improvement plans and to support instructional improvement. They worked with school staff to collect and analyze student achievement data, implemented new curricula or instructional strategies, and organized teacher professional development (see Exhibit 16 for examples from the case study sites). These additional school staff typically worked half-time or more in each identified school, with no classroom responsibilities of their own.

Having extra school-based staff can help build the knowledge and skill of the faculty to improve instruction, but those extra staff need skills and knowledge of their own to carry out that role effectively. The case study schools varied in regard to how qualified and helpful they found the extra staff to be. In several examples, the staff designated to provide professional development focused on evaluating staff instead. In other cases, the skills of the additional staff were not well-matched to the needs of the school. For example, one large district that assigned curriculum facilitators to schools did so without regard to the specific needs of the teachers; hence, it was accidental whether the match was a good one.

In case study schools, coaches or specialists, who provided regular, on-site professional development, were often paid out of Title I finds. This use of funds is consistent with NCLB's requirement that schools identified for improvement under Title I must allocate 10 percent of their Title I budget to professional development. As was true in 2001-02, **a majority but not all districts with identified schools reported requiring their identified schools to allocate a minimum percentage of their Title I budget to professional development.** Seventy-nine percent of districts reported making this requirement; these districts serve 77 percent of the nation's identified schools.

Exhibit 16

Examples of Additional School-Based Staff to Support School Improvement

A large urban district assigned central office curriculum specialists (most of whom were literacy specialists) to work full-time in low-performing schools, including schools identified for improvement under Title I. These improvement specialists helped principals and teachers disaggregate and analyze state and local achievement data, developed an annual instructional calendar that emphasized skills and content areas where students were weak, developed and administered formative school-based assessments, and reviewed the results of these assessments on weekly early-release days. Teachers praised the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues during this time in planning instruction. The specialists provided professional development to teachers both formally on the early-release days and informally as teachers requested it.

In one mid-size suburban district all schools worked with a half-time literacy coach from a local college. Literacy coaches provided professional development for teachers, did classroom observations, modeled lessons, and met with teachers regularly. In one school that was identified for improvement under Title I, the literacy coach attended the upper and lower elementary team meetings, observed each classroom once every three weeks, and held voluntary grade level meetings before school. His major goals included making sure that teachers understood the new English and language arts standards and helping teachers learn to use running records and literacy circles.

One large suburban district assigned all low-performing (including schools identified for improvement under Title I) schools reading and mathematics support teachers. Support teachers were district employees who worked four days a week at a targeted school under the supervision of the district reading and math directors; on the fifth day they worked out of the central office. They helped to administer and score diagnostic and interim assessments, created and maintained a schoolwide database on student performance, participated in extended planning with grade level teams, mentored first and second year teachers (who were required to meet with the support teachers once a week), demonstrated lessons, and maintained libraries of instructional materials. Instructional support teachers relieved classroom teachers of much of the paperwork burden associated with scoring and tracking district assessment results.

District and School Capacity to Support Improvement

Districts vary enormously in their capacity to design and implement interventions and support school improvement efforts. Some schools also require greater levels of support and assistance than do others. Some of this variation can be explained by local context (e.g., the level of need and the proportion of low-performing schools and children to be served); some can be explained by the number of administrators and staff in central offices and schools.

In 2002-03, large and urban districts were more likely to provide assistance of various kinds to identified schools; small districts—serving roughly a third of all identified schools—provided many kinds of assistance less often. Support for planning and data use—a key district responsibility under NCLB—was more likely to include a wider array of activities in larger districts and urban districts than in smaller districts and rural districts. For example, 71 percent of very large districts reported that they provided an extensive range of support for planning and data use (meaning that they provide all 10 of the types of support included in the TASSIE survey),[16] compared with 50 to 52 percent of large and medium districts, and 37 percent of small districts.

[16] See the appendix regarding the 10 types of support.

Larger districts and urban or suburban districts were also more likely to report that they provided identified schools with assistance from school support teams, distinguished teachers, or principal coaches. For example, 77 percent of very large districts reported that identified schools received help from school support teams, compared with 43 percent of small districts (see Exhibit 17). Forty percent of rural districts with identified schools provided those schools with assistance from school support teams, compared with 66 and 68 percent of suburban and urban districts. Overall**, only half of small and rural districts with identified schools provided any of these forms of assistance (school support teams, distinguished teachers, or principal mentors) in 2002-03.**

Exhibit 17

Assistance Provided by the District to Identified Schools, by District Size

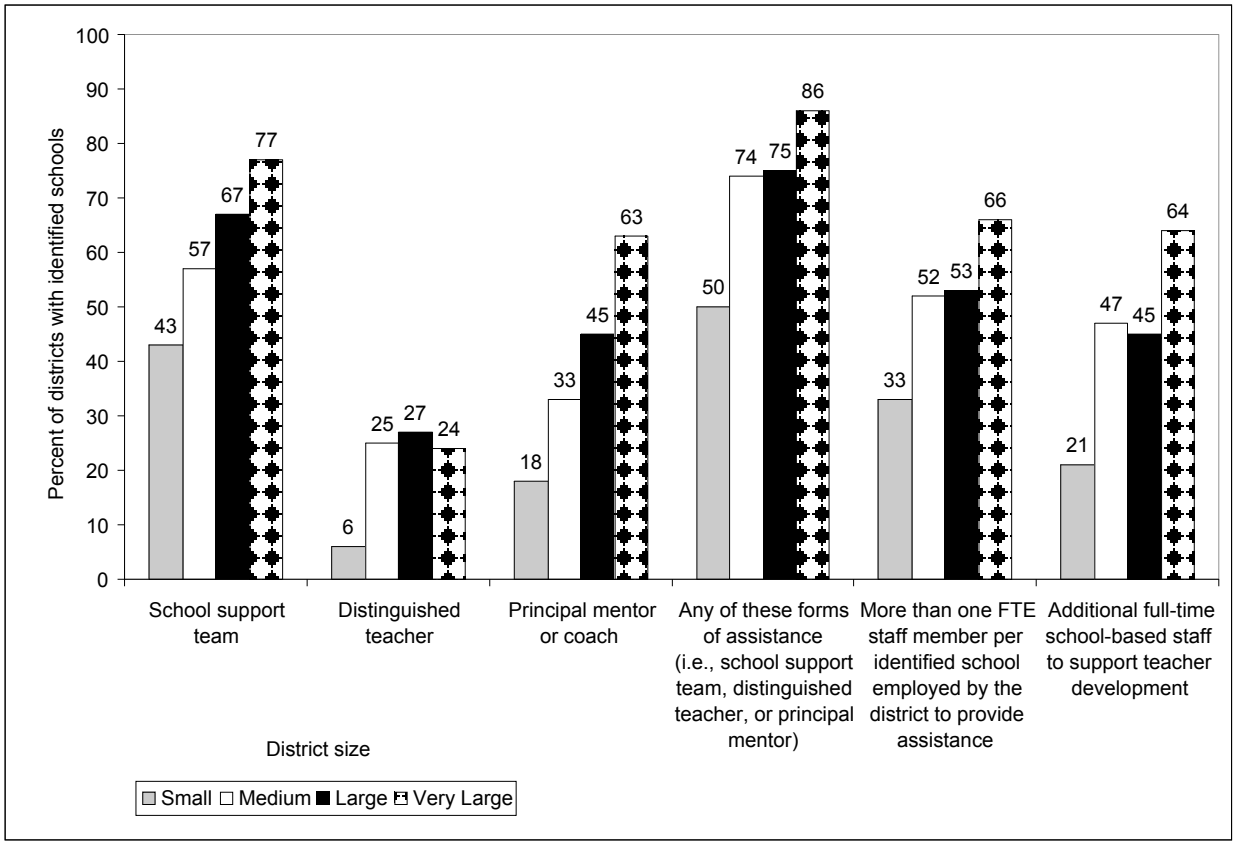


Exhibit Reads: Among districts with identified schools, 43 percent of small districts, 57 percent of medium sized districts, 67 percent of large districts, and 77 percent of very large districts provided school support teams to identified schools.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Larger districts and urban or suburban districts were more likely to assign additional school-based staff to identified schools to support teacher professional development, and they provided greater support for professional development more generally. For example, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of very large districts provided identified schools with additional full-time staff to

support teacher professional development. This practice was far less common among small districts, with only one-fifth of such districts reporting that they assigned additional staff (see Exhibit 17). Similarly, about half of urban and suburban districts assigned additional full-time staff to identified schools for teacher professional development, compared with just 15 percent of rural districts. Larger districts and urban districts were also more likely to report that identified schools received additional professional development or greater access to professional development resources.

Finally, larger districts and urban districts were more likely to centralize decisions about curriculum and to support the alignment of curriculum with academic content standards and assessments. For example, larger districts were more likely to have required schools to adopt new reading and mathematics curricula than smaller districts (72 percent of very large districts had a required reading curriculum, compared with 53 percent of small districts). Larger districts also tended to provide schools with a greater range of support for curriculum alignment. For example, more than half (57 percent) of very large districts provided an extensive range of support for curriculum alignment, including local content standards, detailed curriculum guides, model lesson plans, and other tools to improve alignment. (Districts providing an "extensive" range of support engaged in at least 9 of the 10 activities identified in the TASSIE district survey.)[17] Only one-quarter of small districts with identified schools provided the same extensive range of support for curriculum alignment. The same pattern also held true for urban districts, compared with suburban and rural districts.

Not all districts had the staffing necessary to provide assistance to their identified schools; this was particularly true in small districts. Nationwide, nearly half of districts with identified schools (45 percent) reported that they employed *no* staff who were specially charged with providing support for teacher development in identified schools. Smaller districts were less likely to employ staff with special responsibility for providing assistance to identified schools, and when they did, they tended to have fewer of these staff per identified school than larger districts. Larger districts had more of these staff available to provide assistance. This was true both in absolute terms (because larger districts had larger central offices and employed more staff) and relative to the number of identified schools in the district. For example, two-thirds of very large districts employed more than one full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff member *per identified school* to provide assistance to those schools, compared with one-third of small districts (see Exhibit 17). Only 6 percent of very large districts reported that they employed no special staff at all, compared with 27 percent of large districts, 38 percent of medium districts, and 55 percent of small districts.

Survey data also showed that districts with more FTE staff available per identified school were more likely to have provided those schools with distinguished teachers, principal mentors, additional professional development, and school-based teacher development. These patterns suggest that adequate staffing is a key element of district capacity to provide assistance to low-performing schools.

The case study sites illustrated the range of staffing resources available to different types of districts. At one end of the spectrum, an affluent suburban county system was able to assign a

[17] See the appendix regarding the 10 support activities.

full-time professional development teacher, a full-time reading specialist, and a mentor teacher to each school in the county. In addition, the Title I office assigned an instructional specialist to each Title I school. At the other end of the spectrum, a small rural district had four central office staff members in total and no reading resource teachers in any of its schools. This district and several other case study districts like it relied exclusively on state and federal funding streams for needed resources for schools.

Some districts had reorganized their central offices to free staff to work with low-performing schools. As described above in Exhibit 16, one large urban district had reassigned central office curriculum staff to work full-time in schools as improvement facilitators. In another large urban district, Title I coordinators based in the central office worked as school improvement team leaders in one or two schools each. Other districts had reorganized their central office staff into teams to oversee school improvement efforts.

Districts often relied on special funding streams to provide essential support for additional staff positions, although special federal funds reached a relatively small proportion of schools that continued to be identified for improvement. In case study schools where new staff were assigned to identified schools to provide support, funding for those positions frequently came from federal sources, such as the Reading First, Title I, and the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program, or from state school improvement funds. Rarely were these positions funded locally. In a small district, for example, Reading First funds paid for the services of a literacy coach, the only additional support position in the school. In Louisiana, identified schools were encouraged to apply for CSR grants, in part because those grants bring additional staff and resources to schools.

Although federal funding streams were an important resource for some schools and districts, they reached only a minority of all identified schools nationwide. Fourteen percent of schools that continued to be identified for improvement in 2002-03 received support through the Reading First program. Similarly, 17 percent of all continuously identified schools reported that they had received funds through the CSR program.

The amount and intensity of assistance provided by districts depended both on the staffing and other resources available to the district and on the number of schools to be served. Of the estimated 1,800 districts that had identified schools nationwide in 2002-03, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) had just one or two schools identified for improvement in 2002-03 (see Exhibit 3 in the introduction to this report). The majority of these districts, however, were small, with no more than three Title I schools overall—the districts least likely to have adequate staffing and other resources available to meet the needs of even the small number of Title I identified schools they were required to serve. In fact, the smallest districts in the case study sample—with the smallest numbers of identified schools—had few staff and very few options for mounting meaningful improvement efforts. These districts depended most heavily on their states and on outside sources of assistance to serve their identified schools. By contrast, large districts in the case study sample had the necessary staff and expertise in their central offices to organize effective support to schools, and where the number of schools to be helped was relatively small, these districts had the option of concentrating resources where they were needed most. As a result, large case study districts with a small fraction of all their schools that

were chronically low-performing were able to mount relatively intensive assistance efforts. In other large districts, local resources could be stretched thin because of overwhelming need. In one urban district, for example, all 11 of the middle schools in the district were identified for improvement. The district was investing substantial resources in turning those schools around, although the challenge of producing improvements in student achievement in 11 middle schools simultaneously was a formidable one.

Schools differed in their organizational structures and capacity and therefore in their ability to launch effective improvement efforts and to take advantage of assistance and intervention. The case studies suggest that schools also need a minimal organizational structure in place to be able to benefit from assistance that is provided. Several schools had new principals—new to the school and new to the job. Others had experienced principals who simply were not strong leaders as judged by the lack of coherence and direction in the school's improvement efforts. Similarly, schools varied in the proportion of inexperienced teachers on their staff and the rate of faculty turnover. Analogous to districts, schools with a small proportion of students achieving below grade level were better able to concentrate on those students, compared with schools in which virtually all students are low-performing. These differences among schools often reflected quite different needs in terms of the assistance and support required for principals and teachers.

District Strategies for Targeting Assistance and Support

NCLB assumes that states and districts will provide schools identified for improvement under Title I with the resources and assistance needed to improve instruction to make AYP and exit school improvement status. States and districts can respond to these provisions in NCLB by organizing assistance that is specially targeted to identified Title I schools or by ensuring that identified Title I schools are included in assistance efforts targeted to low-performing schools more generally.

As shown earlier, most districts in 2002-03 were actively engaged in providing support of various kinds to identified Title I schools. The majority of districts with identified Title I schools (59 percent) were small, with enrollments under 3,500. Nearly a third of districts with identified schools (31 percent) had three or fewer schools in the district (Title I and non-Title I). These districts had little need to consider options for targeting assistance to their Title I identified schools, and little reason to differentiate the assistance they provided identified schools from the assistance they provided to others. Larger districts that served identified schools, schools that were low-performing but not identified, and higher-performing schools had to make choices about which schools to serve and whether identified Title I schools would receive more or different kinds of assistance. The analyses presented in this section include only districts with each of these *three* types of schools (36 percent of districts with identified schools), and so exclude a large number of smaller districts where all schools are low-performing or identified for improvement.

Districts typically provided most kinds of assistance to *all* of their schools, whether or not they were low-performing or Title I identified. Most districts with low-performing schools, of which Title I identified schools are a subset, and other higher-performing schools provided most forms of assistance to all their schools, including assistance with planning,

analyzing budgets, and implementing research-based improvement strategies. Only a small percent of these districts provided such assistance only to identified Title I schools. For example, almost all of these districts identified research-based strategies for all their schools. Similarly, nearly three-quarters of these districts helped all types of schools—including those that were higher performing—write a school improvement plan. A small number of these districts—13 percent—helped identified Title I schools write or revise improvement plans, but did not provide that assistance to other kinds of schools. Similar ratios held for other types of support (see Exhibit 18).

Almost every district had the same reading and mathematics curriculum requirements for all schools in the district, whether or not they were higher-performing, low-performing, or identified for improvement under Title I. Fewer than 5 percent of districts that had adopted programs reported that they had adopted a new curriculum or set of instructional materials in reading or mathematics for their Title I identified schools only. This may explain why principals of continuously identified schools cited reasons of instructional consistency, not Title I identification, for adopting new reading and language arts curricula.

An exception lies in the area of principal mentors or coaches. A majority of districts with identified schools, other low-performing schools, and higher-performing schools that assigned principal mentors or coaches had restricted them to Title I or low-performing schools, rather than making them available to all types of schools in the district. Similarly, among districts that required the adoption of school reform models for at least some of their schools, about a third targeted that requirement to their low-performing and Title I identified schools (see Exhibit 18).

Districts with low-performing schools, none of which were identified for improvement in 2002-03, offered the same kinds of support to those schools as districts with identified schools. In most respects, districts with identified Title I schools that were required respond to NCLB provisions regarding school support did not appear to act differently from other districts with schools they classified as low-performing but that were not identified for improvement. For example, districts with low-performing schools, none of which were identified under Title I, were just as likely to provide those schools with school support teams as districts with identified schools. The same held true for distinguished teachers and principal mentors, as well as for various kinds of support for planning. NCLB specifically requires that districts help identified schools develop an improvement plan, review the school budget, and identify research-based improvement strategies. Districts with low-performing schools, but without Title I identified schools, undertook these steps as often as districts with identified schools did.

Districts provided the same kinds of assistance to schools in corrective action as they did to schools that had been identified more recently for improvement. Districts with both types of schools provided all types of assistance to schools identified for just one or two years just as often as they did to schools identified for three years or more. This pattern held true for all types of on-site assistance, additional staffing in schools, professional development, and support for planning and data use.

Exhibit 18

District Support to Identified Schools, Other Low-Performing Schools, and Higher-Performing Schools, Among Districts That Had All Three Types of Schools

	To all types of schools, including higher-performing schools, low-performing schools, and Title I identified schools	To all types of low-performing schools, including Title I identified schools, only	To Title I identified schools only
Identify research-based improvement strategies	87	7	2
Write or revise a school improvement plan	71	8	13
School reform model adoption, among districts that require at least some of their schools to adopt a model	66	11	22
Analyze and revise the school's budget so that school resources are effectively allocated	56	13	9
School support team	45	9	9
Extensive range of support for planning and data use	25	15	11
Extensive range of support for professional development	24	4	4
Distinguished Teacher	20	3	6
Principal mentor or coach	10	22	12

Exhibit reads: Among districts with Title I identified schools, other low-performing schools, and higher-performing schools, 87 percent of districts identified research-based improvement strategies for all three types of schools. Seven percent of districts reported that they provided this form of assistance only to low-performing schools, including Title I identified schools. Two percent of districts reported that they provided this kind of assistance only to schools identified under Title I.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Some districts provided more intensive assistance to schools identified for improvement for three years or more than to those identified for one or two years. For example, nearly half of districts (46 percent) reported that schools identified for three years or more received more intensive support from school support teams or other technical assistance providers. The same number of districts reported that these schools received larger school improvement grants. Half of districts reported that schools identified for three years or more

received greater monitoring and oversight from the district, compared with other schools identified for improvement.

Districts with identified schools targeted schools for assistance and interventions on the basis of considerations other than or in addition to Title I program improvement status. Although considerable improvement activity was under way in schools and among districts, much of that activity in 2002-03 was occurring as a result of state and local accountability systems. Across the case study sites, district strategies for providing assistance included: providing the same services to all schools, targeting all low-performing schools, targeting all Title I schools, or targeting a particular subset of "problem" schools. In general, districts provided many supports to all their schools. In some of the case study sites, districts argued the need to help all schools because all were low-performing and therefore in need of assistance. In other cases, in which low-performing schools were a subset of all schools, districts provided extra assistance to all their low-performing schools.

In addition to singling out high-need schools for assistance, several case study districts provided "preemptive" assistance to all of their Title I schools, including those that had not yet been identified for improvement, aiming to ensure that these schools did not lapse into improvement status. Case study districts that targeted assistance to all low-performing schools explained that because these schools moved in and out of official Title I identification, those that had moved out continued to need assistance.

Districts could encounter problems if they provided some schools, but not others, with resources and assistance. For example, one suburban district with many high-achieving schools formed a School Improvement Unit to provide additional resources and oversight for the district's lowest-performing schools. The districts' well-regarded mathematics and reading supervisors and other central office staff worked only with schools in the School Improvement Unit, prompting complaints from parents at other schools in the district. The district director of instruction said, "It's a challenge to reallocate the time and attention of central office staff. The community doesn't want higher-performing schools to suffer." Similarly, a large urban district retreated from its major reallocation of central office resources to low-performing schools as a result of pressure from the communities of the other schools.

Public Reporting

Another central principle underlying the Title I accountability system is that parents and the public have a clear understanding of the progress for which schools are being held accountable—the progress of school improvement efforts and the progress toward achieving the goal of all students reaching proficiency. NCLB has strengthened the reporting provisions of Title I by specifying that states and districts receiving Title I funds must issue "report cards" with state assessment results and lists of schools identified for improvement. NCLB also requires that state assessment results for student subgroups and the Title I improvement status of a school be reported, along with information about teacher quality. State report cards provide information about the performance of districts and states as a whole, whereas district report cards provide information down to the school level. NLCB identified the requirements for state and district report cards. ED published final guidance on how states and districts should prepare their annual report cards in September 2003 (ED 2003a).

Although most districts made school report cards available to the public in 2002-03, the number of districts that did so had declined. In 2002-03, 81 percent of districts made school report cards available to the public, down from 93 percent in the previous school year. Possible reasons for this decline may have been due to states' and districts' transitioning to new reporting formats as seen in case study sites. For example:

- Louisiana did not provide school report cards during 2002-03—in contrast with previous years when two types of school report cards were issued—because the state was revising the format of these report cards to comply with NCLB requirements by 2003-04. (School performance data were available in other formats.)

- Michigan no longer generated school report cards, instead leaving the preparation of school report cards up to districts, which had varied capacity in 2002-03 to generate data in the form required by NCLB (the SEA posted a checklist on its Web site with the items that schools and districts had to include in their public reports).

- Maryland and Washington revamped their Web sites to provide 2002-03 school report card data, but not all of the data required by NCLB was readily available. Some districts in these states had not used the data available on the state Web site to update school report card information for 2002-03, whereas others made data available on their district Web sites.

School report cards were most likely to include assessment data, but those data were not always disaggregated by all of the subgroups identified in NCLB. Information on (1) student performance data on statewide academic assessments, and (2) student performance at the school on state assessments compared with all students in the district and state were provided in school report cards in 97 percent and 89 percent of districts, respectively. The percentages were very similar for districts with Title I schools identified for improvement—98 percent and 88 percent, respectively.

In 2002-03, more than 60 percent of districts that prepared school report cards reported school assessment data for student subgroups for five of the six categories specified in NCLB—between 62 and 68 percent of districts with a subgroup enrollment of 10 percent or more (see Exhibit 19).[18] Frequently, states and districts did not include assessment information about migrant students in their school report cards as is now required under NCLB (only 50 percent of districts did). Little change occurred in public reporting for student subgroups, compared with 2001-02 (5 percent or less) except for migrant status (18 percent more).

[18] A threshold of 10 percent per subgroup was established for analysis to exclude districts with very small subgroup populations (i.e., districts where the subgroup population was too small to be included on report cards). This threshold does not necessarily reflect the district's actual minimum number of students per subgroup for reporting purposes as defined in each state accountability plan.

Exhibit 19

Whether Districts Disaggregated Student Assessment Data on School Report Cards, Among Districts With School Report Cards and a Subgroup Enrollment of 10 Percent or More

	Percent of districts
By racial/ethnic group	68
By limited-English-proficient status	63
By special education status	65
By economically disadvantaged status	62
By gender	63
By migrant status	50

Exhibit reads: Among Title I districts that enrolled 10 percent or more racial or ethnic groups and produced school report cards, 68 percent disaggregated student assessment data by racial or ethnic group.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

The U.S. Department of Education's nonregulatory guidance on report cards under Title I of NCLB specifies that individual school report cards are not required, but information about each school must be included in the district report card (ED 2003a). *Education Week* reported in its *Quality Counts 2003* issue that of the 47 states and the District of Columbia requiring school report cards, 19 did not include or require disaggregated student performance data. (Two additional states made disaggregated data available on the Web or in other published reports; one state required school report cards beginning in 2003-04.) A review of state Web sites by the study team indicated that 37 states made some form of disaggregated student assessment data available online for the 2002-03 *state* report card which also suggest that some states were providing these data for schools in their state.

NCLB calls for districts to provide information on student performance on the state's additional academic indicators used in making AYP determinations. At the secondary level this includes the graduation rate for high schools. In 2002-03, among Title I districts that prepared school report cards, 81 percent included information on high school graduation rates (the percentage was the same for districts with identified Title I schools).

New reporting requirements under NCLB were being met less frequently than data that had traditionally been reported. Although most states and districts had been providing information on school and student achievement and attendance rates to the public for years, some of this data did not meet NCLB reporting requirements (e.g., the method used to calculate high school graduation rates). Other information, such as school improvement status and teacher quality required under NCLB, was often not reported previously. In 2002-03, only 35 percent of Title I districts that prepared school report cards (42 percent of districts with identified Title I schools) included information about Title I improvement status in their report cards as required; in 2001-02, 31 percent of districts that prepared school report cards did so (47 percent of districts with identified Title I schools). Yet schools and districts often used other means to communicate

this information, such as letters to parents, parent information sessions, school newsletters, and state and district Web sites. District survey data indicated that among districts with identified schools, 94 percent sent written notification to the homes of parents that their child's school had been identified for improvement. In some cases, states imposed additional requirements regarding parent notification of schools identified for improvement. For example, Arizona's state accountability system required districts to meet with parents about school status.

Education Week in its "Quality Counts 2003" issue also reported that 22 states required that school or district report cards include information about teacher characteristics, such as the percent with emergency credentials. Just four states publicly reported teacher qualifications disaggregated by school type in 2002-03. Only California, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee provided parents with information about the credentials of every public school teacher on a Web site. TASSIE survey data indicated that 43 percent of districts included information on the percentage of teachers teaching with an emergency credential or provisional credential and 32 percent include information on the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers in their 2002-03 school report cards.

III Public School Choice and Supplemental Services Under Title I

In addition to keeping parents informed about the performance of their child's school, NCLB calls for districts to provide parents with children in schools identified for improvement under Title I with additional options. Under NCLB, for Title I schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years (i.e., "identified schools"), districts must provide parents of students in these schools with the option of transferring their children to another public school in the district that has not been identified for improvement. If a school does not make AYP for three years (one year after being identified), low-income parents of children in these schools also must be provided with the option of requesting supplemental educational services from state-approved providers for their child. NCLB requires that districts make available an amount equal to 20 percent of the district's Title I, Part A, allocation to fund Title I choice-related transportation and supplemental services. Unlike public school choice, supplemental services are offered only to children from low-income families and not to parents of all children in identified Title I schools. Parents are also to be notified about these options before the school year begins so that they have time to make informed decisions. Because Title I school choice and supplemental services were new requirements for most districts in 2002-03 (though some more limited Title I choice requirements applied to certain schools in 1999-2000), implementation for most districts in 2002-03 represented their initial efforts to implement these requirements.

In 2002-03, few parents transferred their child to schools not identified for improvement or received supplemental services and few districts were required to provide these options. In 2002-03, 16 percent of districts (1,800 LEAs) nationwide had 6,000 Title I schools identified for improvement and corrective action that were therefore required to provide Title I choice; 11 percent of districts (1,100 LEAs) had Title I schools in their second year of improvement and were required to provide supplemental services (see Exhibit 20). **About 7 percent of students in districts that offered supplemental services received services in 2002-03, whereas 1 percent of students in districts that offered choice transferred to another school**. A number of factors emerged from parent focus groups that may have contributed to low participation in Title I choice and supplemental services, including parents not wanting to move their children if they were doing well in the identified school, late and inadequate parental notification, and transportation issues.

Districts did not report challenges associated with the procedural requirements to implement choice and supplemental services to be major barriers to implementation in 2002-03, although they did report other challenges whose magnitude varied significantly by district type. For example, half of all districts with eligible students cited lack of providers in the area as a major challenge to implementing supplemental services and almost half of small districts with eligible students cited no alternate schools as a serious challenge to implementing Title I choice. Districts that did not provide parents with children in identified schools with choice or supplemental services were predominantly small, rural, and poor. Their ability to meet these requirements are challenged by the long standing issues that these types of districts have faced (e.g., limited numbers of schools, long distances between schools and neighboring districts, limited access to outside services).

These findings are elaborated on below in three parts: public school choice, supplemental services, and communication with parents.

Exhibit 20

Participation in Title I Choice and Supplemental Services in 2002-03, Among Districts With Identified Schools

	School choice	Supplemental services
Districts:		
Number required to offer option	1,800	1,100
Number where option offered	1,200	500
Percent were option offered	67%	48%
Schools:		
Number where option required	6,000	1,300
Number where option offered	5,100	800
Percent where option offered	84%	58%
Students (among districts that provided options):		
Number eligible	1,535,000	592,000
Number that participated	18,000	42,000
Percent that participated	1%	7%

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified Title I schools, an estimated 1,800 were required to offer school choice to students enrolled in identified schools and 1,100 districts were required to offer supplemental services to low-income students in schools identified for two or more years. The data presented in this exhibit are estimates at the 95 percent confidence interval with 32 degrees of freedom and estimates have been rounded.

Note: The number of students eligible is underestimated because not all districts that should have provided choice and supplemental services reported providing these options and did not provide eligibility data. See Exhibits 21, 30 and 31 for explanations regarding the limitations of these data.

Source: TASSIE district survey and Eligibility Dataset.

Public School Choice Under Title I

In 2002-03, 16 percent of all districts had identified Title I schools and therefore were required to provide public school choice, but only two-thirds (67 percent) of these districts did so. The districts providing choice accounted for about 5,100 identified schools or 84 percent of the 6,000 Title I schools identified for improvement in 2002-03. The percentage in 2002-03 is an increase over the 2001-02 rate when 54 percent of districts with identified schools offered some form of choice (note that all districts with identified Title I schools were not required to offer Title I choice in 2001-02). However, this percentage increase did not translate into more districts offering Title I choice in 2002-03 because Title I choice requirements in 2002-03 under NCLB are different from those in place in 2001-02 under IASA (see Exhibit 21). For Title I under IASA, Congress added requirements in 1999 and 2000 that school choice be offered to students in certain Title I identified schools (i.e., districts with identified schools that also received school improvement reserve funds), but the choice options did not necessarily meet the

current criteria specified under NCLB (i.e., that parents be notified of choice options before the start of the school year and that transferring students be provided with transportation to non-identified schools).

Exhibit 21

Districts That Offered Choice and Students That Exercised Choice in 2001-02 and 2002-03

	2001-02	2002-03
Districts:		
Number required to offer choice	2,300	1,800
Number where choice offered	1,200	1,200
Percent where choice offered	54%	67%
Schools:		
Number where option required	9,000	6,000
Number where choice offered	Not available	5,100
Percent where choice offered	Not available	84%
Students (among districts that provided choice):		
Number eligible	Not available	1,535,000
Number that participated	Not available	18,000
Percent that participated	Not available	1%

Exhibit reads: In 2001-02 there were an estimated 2,300 districts nationwide with identified Title I schools (this number may be overestimated because not all districts with identified Title I schools were required to offer choice under IASA as described in the text). There were an estimated 1,800 districts with identified Title I schools in 2002-03 that were required to offer public school choice to students. The data presented in this exhibit are estimates at the 95 percent confidence interval with 32 degrees of freedom and hence the numbers may have been higher or lower than indicated.

Note: All numbers have been rounded. Percentages of districts and schools were calculated by dividing the number that provided choice by the number required to offer choice. The number of students eligible for choice is underestimated because a third (33 percent) of the 16 percent of districts required to offer choice reported that they did not offer choice and did not provide data on the number of eligible students. Additionally, the estimates of the number of students eligible and participating in choice in 2002-03 has a 95 percent confidence interval of 932,000 to 2,138,000 eligible students and a 95 percent confidence interval of 9,000 to 28,000 students participating in choice. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey and Eligibility Dataset.

Districts required to implement choice under NCLB, but that did not do so in 2002-03, were predominantly small, rural, and poor. This finding reflects, in part, that the majority (over half, see Exhibit 4) of districts with identified Title I schools were small rural districts and, in part, the limitations on choice in small rural districts.

Some of the lack of implementation of Title I choice may have been due to lack of clarity at the local level about which schools choice options for students were required. For example, districts in one state were advised not to apply interventions, including choice and

supplemental services, if it appeared an identified school would make AYP in 2002-03 (based on 2001-02 test scores). Some schools in these states that offered choice in 2001-02 continued to do so in 2002-03; schools that appeared as if they might make AYP for a second consecutive year did not. In another state, uncertainty over how to implement Title I school choice in schools in districts operating under desegregation orders complicated implementation. For instance, many districts in Louisiana delayed implementing choice provisions (including parent notification) pending discussions with the U.S. Department of Education over issues related to desegregation orders that affected more than 70 percent of the districts. At the same time, in 2002-03, Louisiana schools that continued to miss their growth targets after having been identified for improvement had to provide school choice options to parents under the state accountability system.

The most common choice option available to parents of children enrolled in Title I schools identified for improvement was transferring to any other school in the district at the appropriate grade level that was not identified for improvement (see Exhibit 22), but the options varied significantly on the basis of district size and locale. Small (71 percent) and medium (72 percent) districts were more likely than others to respond that parents could choose among all schools in the district at the appropriate grade level, whereas urban (28 percent) and very large (50 percent) districts were more likely to have offered parents a subset of schools that had been paired with a sending (identified) school. As seen in large case study districts, the need to minimize transportation logistics played a part in explaining these differences (see example below).

Exhibit 22

School Choice Options Available to Parents of Children Enrolled in Identified Title I Schools, Among Districts That Offered Choice

School choice options provided	Percent of districts with identified schools
All other schools in the district at the appropriate grade level that are not identified for improvement under Title I*	62
A subset of schools that have been paired with the sending school*	19
All other schools within a certain geographic zone	15
Public schools outside the district	5

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools that offered Title I choice in 2002-03, 62 percent offered, as a school choice option, all other schools in the district at the appropriate grade level that were not identified for improvement under Title I.

Note: As noted in the text, there were significant differences by district size for the two options with an asterisk (*); there was also a significant difference by urbanicity for the option of "a subset of receiving schools that were paired with a sending school." See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Among the 67 percent of districts with identified Title I schools that provided choice in 2002-03, there were an estimated 1.5 million students eligible to exercise choice because they were in an identified Title I school; about 2 percent of these students requested a transfer from an identified school and about 1 percent then transferred to another school.

Of the estimated 1.5 million eligible students, 28,000 requested a transfer to a non-identified school, and about 18,000 or 1 percent of eligible students actually transferred because their school was identified for improvement (Exhibit 21).[19]

- The median number of eligible Title I students in a typical *district* offering choice in 2002-03 was 500 (the average was 2,000). In 56 percent of districts with identified Title I schools where choice was offered, no students transferred. In the remaining 44 percent of districts where choice was offered and some students elected to transfer schools, the median number of students that transferred was 10 (the average was 55).
- Similarly, 67 percent of identified Title I *schools* with students eligible to transfer (in districts where choice was offered) reported that no students transferred. In the remaining 33 percent of identified Title I schools where students elected to transfer schools, the median number of students that transferred to another school was eight (the average was five).

There was a great deal of variability among districts offering school choice. So, for example, 20 percent of districts had less than 100 students eligible to transfer and 30 percent of districts had 1,000 or more eligible students. Exhibit 23 illustrates the distribution across districts in the number of students that actually transferred in 2002-03.

Exhibit 23

Distribution of Districts That Offered the Title I School Choice Option by Number of Participating Students, Among Districts With Identified Schools in 2002-03

Number of students who transferred out of an identified Title I school using the Title I school choice option:	Percentage of districts offering Title I choice
None	56
1 to 9 students	21
10 to 99 students	19
100 or more students	5

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified Title I schools that offered choice in 2002-03, 56 percent had no students transfer.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

[19] The number of students eligible to exercise choice is underestimated because a third (33 percent) of the 16 percent of districts that had at least one Title I school identified for improvement indicated that they did not offer choice under Title I and did not provide this information. Any estimates of the number of students who requested a transfer and then transferred to non-identified schools include data only from districts that offered school choice to students in identified Title I schools.

The location (urbanicity) and size of a district was related to the number of students eligible for Title I choice; there were significant differences by district size and locale in the number of students eligible to exercise choice and the number of students who requested a transfer. As might have been expected, averages were highest in districts with the highest number of identified Title I schools—very large, urban districts (see Exhibit 24). Thus, for example, in two very large urban case study districts, the number of students eligible for public school choice was about 12,000, contrasted with a very large suburban case study district and a small rural case study district both with around 300 students eligible for choice.

Exhibit 24

Average Number of Students Eligible to Exercise Choice, Among Districts With Identified Schools and That Offered Title I Choice

All districts	District size			
	Small	Medium	Large	Very large
2,200	500	600	1,900	15,000
	District urbanicity			
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	
2,200	6,200	1,100	500	

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified Title I schools that offered choice, the average number of students eligible to exercise school choice in 2002-03 was 2,200. In small districts with identified schools that offered Title I choice, the average number of students was 500; the average number was 600 students in medium districts; 1,900 in large districts; and 15,000 in very large districts.

Note: Numbers rounded to the nearest hundred. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

The number of students that requested a transfer to a non-identified school may reflect the many considerations that go into a parent's choice of schools for their child such as how well their child is achieving, the quality of the school staff, the availability of special programs, and the proximity to their home, as described in parent focus groups. Late and inadequate parent notification and limited choices for alternate schools, described later in this section, may have also contributed to low parent participation. In addition to the identification status of a school, research at the case study sites indicated that other factors influenced a parent's decision in selecting a school.

- One parent in an identified school in a very large urban district indicated her reasons for not transferring her child to a non-identified school, even though her child's school was identified: "I did my own research and knew about it [identification]…but I liked the principal and loved the kindergarten teacher. I like the K-3 program and that we have school uniforms. Plus, it's the neighborhood school, my husband went here, and his father went here." She added: "Test scores are not just [the] school's responsibility—I'll put in the effort too. It's a well-rounded community, I'm very happy here and my child is doing amazing work."

- Another parent explained her decision to stay as follows: "As a parent, you have the option to pull your kid out or to stay with the promise of school improvement and the transformation plan. You stay because this is your community."
- Some parents in a small rural district indicated that they had selected their child's school because, as a small school with small class sizes, it afforded more personalized attention: "I can call our principal at home. It's like that with the teacher also, if I need something I can call her at home." In schools that serve limited English proficient (LEP) students, the availability of bilingual staff who can communicate with parents is a strong incentive for parents to keep their children at the school.
- Proximity to home and ease of access were also important considerations.

In districts with choice policies that predated NCLB, parents who had already exercised choice may have reduced the number of students exercising choice in 2002-03. Three case study states—Arizona, Michigan, and Washington—have open enrollment policies, and parents had already selected the school they wanted their child to attend.[20] Unlike some other choice policies, NCLB requires that transportation be provided to students in identified Title I schools who choose to attend a non-identified school.

Data from other sources also suggest that many parents did not immediately think of transferring their child when a school was identified for improvement in 2002-03. A national 2003 poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools indicated that, for schools identified for improvement, 74 percent of parents preferred to have additional efforts made in their child's school, 25 percent preferred to transfer their child to a non-identified school, and 1 percent had no opinion. The poll also showed that the public was divided in regard to whether parents in the community had enough information to choose another school for their children to attend if their current school was identified for improvement; 48 percent of public school parents believed parents in their community had enough information, and 50 percent believed they did not (2 percent did not know) (Lowell and Gallup 2003).

At the same time, more than half of the districts (53 percent) that offered choice reported that no students received their first choice of schools when transferring to a non-identified school—a fact that may have influenced the final decision about whether to transfer to another school or not. Nationwide, of the students that requested a transfer in 2002-03, an estimated 17,000 (or 62 percent of those requesting a transfer) received their first choice of schools. Differences by district size in the number of students who received their first choice of schools when transferring were also significant. Students in small districts were less

[20] NCLB choice requirements are among a growing number of options that provide parents with choices within the public education system. Regions and districts of different sizes vary to a considerable degree in the availability and type of public school choice programs they offer. Additionally, districts experienced in developing options may have been better prepared to carry out the NCLB choice requirements. An analysis by the National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in the Use of School Choice 1993 to 1999*, showed that the decrease in assigned public school enrollment had almost completely been offset by an increase from 11 to 14 percent in parentally chosen public school enrollment (NCES 2003). TASSIE district survey data indicated that about half (49 percent) of districts with and without identified schools offered some form of public school choice in 2002-03; this compares with 41 percent in 2001-02.

likely to have received their first choice of schools because there were fewer schools to choose from compared with medium and large districts.

The number of non-identified schools available as alternatives can influence the extent to which parents choose to send their children, at all grade levels, to non-identified schools. The number of schools was also linked to the size of the district**,** but the availability of alternative schools at the middle and high school levels was limited across all districts (see Exhibit 25). For example, although having no alternate schools available at the elementary level was less likely, more than half of districts with identified schools reported they had no alternate high schools for parents to choose and over a third had no alternate middle schools. There were also significant differences by district size in the average number of alternate schools available to families in identified schools, with very large districts having the largest numbers of alternate schools (e.g., 17 at the elementary level). But having more alternate schools did not necessarily guarantee more choice as seen in some of the case study districts (see Exhibit 26).

Exhibit 25

Number of Alternate Schools Available to Parents With Students in Identified Title I Schools, Among Districts That Offered Choice

	Mean number of schools
Alternate schools for children in elementary grades	3
Alternate schools for children in middle grades	1
Alternate schools for children in high school grades	0

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools and that offered choice in 2002-03, the mean number of alternate schools available to parents with students in identified Title I elementary schools was three.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Exhibit 26

School Choice in Districts With Few Alternate Schools

A very large urban case study district had more than 11,000 students eligible for Title I choice in 37 schools but had very few alternative schools to choose from. (At the middle school level, it had none because they were all identified for improvement.) To try to provide improved services to students in the lowest performing schools, the district drew on additional resources such as increased support staff and funding as an alternative. To minimize transportation logistics, the district limited choices by pairing identified schools with two to four non-identified schools from which parents could choose. Two other case study districts, one medium and one small, had only one alternate elementary school that was not identified for improvement. In one of these districts, the school available to serve as an alternate was quite small and in a rural area of the county.

Districts were taking steps to increase the options available to parents of children in identified schools. ED draft non-regulatory guidance that was available in 2002-03 stipulated that a district had the flexibility under NCLB to determine which schools, among those not identified for improvement, would comprise the range of alternates to which eligible students could transfer. However, Title I regulations (cited in the guidance) also noted that capacity constraints were not allowable reasons for not offering students the transfer options, although districts may take capacity into account when deciding which schools to offer as transfer options. In addition, the guidance suggested that in situations where no schools were available as choice options (e.g., only one school in the district), districts, to the extent practicable, must establish a cooperative agreement with other districts in the area or could offer supplemental educational services (ED 2002). Some districts (5 percent) added teachers or classrooms to schools within the district that had not been identified for improvement—a higher percentage of very large and urban districts (15 percent and 14 percent, respectively) took this approach. A few districts (4 percent) attempted to negotiate agreements with neighboring districts, but they were not successful.

- One medium size case study district tried to establish an agreement with a neighboring district, but the other district declined the request to place students in one of its non-identified schools. The first district was waiting to hear from other nearby districts about their willingness to accept its students. One reason for the lack of interest from neighboring districts was the policy the sending district had established: if parents opted to enroll their children at schools outside the district, the district "would rank students, giving priority [for transportation] to the lowest performing students."
- Other case study data indicated that districts were offering additional services to students in identified schools (e.g., before- and after-school programs, academic tutoring), particularly if the district was faced with difficulties in expanding capacity and where sending students to a neighboring district was not possible (i.e., the nearest district was too far away or would not serve students from another district).

Similar examples were provided in another national study of NCLB implementation which included visits to 15 school districts in 2002-03. They reported that school choice had been difficult to implement in some districts because they had few or no potential receiving schools that could serve the right grade levels and were not in school improvement themselves. Districts had also met with only limited success in persuading neighboring districts to accept out-of-district transfer students. Some districts had to offer supplemental services to students instead of choice in schools in their first year of school improvement (Center on Education Policy 2003).

The challenges to the successful implementation and use of public school choice for students in identified schools generally follows the same pattern in 2002-03 as that for 2001-02; again, the magnitude of the problems associated with procedural requirements were generally not large, but some challenges varied significantly by district type. Overall, only a small portion of districts were greatly affected by these challenges, with difficulties in expanding capacity (39 percent) and lack of space (33 percent) identified most frequently (see Exhibit 27). Districts reported that issues such as no alternate schools in the district (72 percent), lack of transportation to alternate schools (76 percent), and inadequate funding for choice-related

transportation and supplemental services (86 percent) were generally not a problem or posed only a small problem in 2002-03. The extent to which these issues remain a minimal barrier to implementation may depend on the extent of growth in the number of identified schools within a district and in parent demand for both choice and supplemental services (e.g., high demand may exceed funding from the 20 percent set-aside).

Exhibit 27

Challenges Faced by Districts That Implemented School Choice, Among Districts Required to Offer Choice

Type of challenge	Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all or small extent
Expanding capacity	39	12	49
Lack of space in alternate schools	33	22	45
No alternate schools within the district	17	12	72
Lack of transportation to alternate schools	14	10	76
Inability to negotiate agreements with other districts to receive students who wish to transfer	12	9	79
Inability to meet the needs of LEP students in alternate schools	10	13	77
Inability to meet the needs of special education students in alternate schools	9	16	75
An amount equal to 20% of the district's Title I allocation is not adequate to provide transportation to all students who request a transfer to alternate schools or supplemental services	9	6	86
Inadequate information for parents about school choice options	3	2	94
Inadequate information for parents about the status of their child's school as identified for improvement under Title I	3	3	94

Exhibit reads: Among districts that were required to offer choice and made choice options available in 2002-03, 39 percent responded that expanding capacity was a challenge to a great extent, 12 percent responded that it was a challenge to a moderate extent, and 49 percent responded that it was not a challenge or a challenge to a small extent to implementing school choice.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

On the other hand, some differences in the severity of challenges by district size and locale were significant. For example, small districts (42 percent) were more likely than others to have responded that no alternate schools in the district presented a serious challenge to implementing choice; small districts (30 percent) were more likely than others to have responded that lack of

transportation to alternate schools presented a serious challenge; and suburban districts (44 percent) were more likely to have responded that lack of space in alternate schools was a serious challenge. Small (88 percent) and rural (75 percent) districts made up the majority of districts required to implement choice but that did not do so in 2002-03.

Supplemental Educational Services

Under NCLB, states and school districts were required to implement the supplemental educational services provisions at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. The non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education in December 2002 provided states and districts with additional information about how to implement these provisions in 2002-03. Specifically, NCLB requires that supplemental services be consistent with the state's academic content standards and with the instruction provided by the school district. In addition, services must be provided outside the regular school day. School districts, in consultation with parents and providers, must develop specific educational goals for each student. Supplemental service providers must measure the student's progress regularly and report regularly on that progress to teachers and parents. Supplemental services may be provided by a variety of agencies, including for-profit and nonprofit entities, approved school districts, faith-based organizations, and approved public or private schools. Data gathered through the state level interviews, district and principal surveys and site visits to the sample of case study districts provided a look at the early implementation of supplemental services as defined by NCLB.

Implementation of the supplemental services provision was generally slow and uneven in 2002-03. States were slow to publish lists of approved providers, districts were slow to organize services, and few parents signed their children up for additional supplemental educational services.

State Actions

Each state is required to develop criteria for selecting providers, maintain a list of providers and provide school districts with a list of approved providers in their geographic locations, monitor provider services, and withdraw approval from providers that do not meet the statutory requirements to increase students' academic achievement in two years.

Very few states gave a list of approved providers to districts before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. Only five states published lists of approved providers before September 2002. By Jan. 2003, 21 more states posted lists and 41 states plus the District of Columbia posted lists by the end of June 2003. Most state education agencies (SEAs) launched their provider identification process in 2002-03, but some time was required to generate an adequate list of providers. For example, Maryland had approved two providers at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year, but had added 12 more by spring 2003.

States have flexibility in developing a provider approval process. At the same time, NCLB calls for selection criteria that promote participation by the maximum number of providers to ensure that parents have as many choices as possible. Data from state sources (e.g., state

policies, state interviews) indicate that states with identified providers by April 2003[21] often employed a rubric or template to evaluate provider applications for 2002-03. The rubrics were based on the requirements established in NCLB and listed in the Department of Education's non-regulatory guidance. Many states also used the criteria outlined in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) *SEA Toolkit on Supplemental Services in the NCLB Act of 2001*, which in turn was based on NCLB criteria as well as additional measures (CCSSO 2002). Elements adopted from the Toolkit other than those specified in NCLB included: (1) evidence of highly qualified staff (with some states requiring criminal background checks as required by state law for teacher licensure or public school-related employment regulations); (2) letters of reference offering information about positive program results as part of a demonstrated record of effectiveness; (3) adequate organizational resources to meet consumer demand; and (4) conditional approval of newly developed programs.

Finally, some states also added state-developed criteria that included: (1) supervision of services by a certified teacher; (2) evidence of highly qualified paraprofessionals; (3) evidence of interactions with students if the providers used a Web-based program or specific technology requirements; (4) a designated pricing structure; (5) a defined service area; and (6) independence from district or school resources (e.g., the district or school was not required to provide space or resources).

In 2002-03, the number and services of state-approved providers did not adequately match local needs. As discussed later in this section, many districts cited lack of providers as a major challenge to implementation. By April 2003, 43 states and the District of Columbia had approved a total of 1,017 providers, for an average of 23 per state (the same number as in June 2003); however, the approved providers were not evenly distributed across states. Thirty-one states had between one and 20 providers each, six states had between 21 and 30 providers, four states had between 45 and 100 providers, and two states had over 100 providers (Policy and Program Studies Service 2003 and state interviews).

Among districts that provided supplemental services, the average number of supplemental service providers available to students by spring 2003 (April-May) was five per district (a median of three).

Even though it may have appeared that there were providers statewide, many providers did not serve rural areas or districts with small numbers of students or students with special needs. In other areas, providers lacked the capacity to meet the demand for their services. A Title I director in a small rural case study district stated: "We don't have Sylvan up here. There is not a single provider who wants to come up here because we don't have enough students." In addition, online providers had not been available to some rural communities where Internet access and computer equipment were limited or unavailable. In one high-poverty case study district that offered online services, parents needed to have computers

[21] Two states, Florida and Wyoming, had no identified schools in their second year of improvement and, as a result, were not required to develop a list of approved providers in 2002-03. Spring 2003 (April-May) was the study's data collection time frame for state-level and provider information on supplemental services to coincide with district and school survey data collection. State-level policies and practices after this time period would have little impact on 2002-03 local-level implementation of supplemental services.

and Internet access to have used providers' services, a luxury that many parents in the district could not afford. According to local respondents, without hands-on assistance, only higher functioning students had the discipline to participate in a distance-learning program, thereby excluding some of the students most in need—younger students, students whose English proficiency was limited, and those who were disabled.[22]

In some cases, providers found themselves having to restructure their programs because they were unable to hire enough staff due to districts' inability to provide sufficient notice regarding the number of students that signed up for services; others had to turn students away because of insufficient staff. For example, a large urban case study district had 6,000 eligible students, but the eight approved providers could serve only 1,300 students or 22 percent of those eligible. Some providers interviewed indicated that they needed to serve a minimum number of students for their businesses to be viable. Meeting that threshold was difficult for small districts (ED 2004b).

Approved providers represented a variety of organizations. As of April 2003 (the period of survey data collection), the bulk of providers were private providers (e.g., not-for-profit private groups or for-profit organizations such as Sylvan Educational Solutions, Kaplan Educational Centers, Kumon Math and Reading Centers). A third (32 percent) of approved providers were school districts and schools (see Exhibit 28). The make up of providers remained similar through the end of the 2003-04 school year (June 2003).

Exhibit 28
Supplemental Services Providers in April 2003

Type of provider	Number of providers	Percent of total
Private: Faith-based	18	2
Private: Online	98	10
Other private	472	46
Districts and public schools	326	32
Colleges and universities	32	3
Other or unknown types	71	7

Exhibit reads: Among states that approved supplemental services providers, 18 were faith-based organizations or 2 percent of all approved providers as of April 2003.

Note: Information on the types of approved providers was available from 43 states and the District of Columbia. Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: Policy and Program Studies Service unpublished database and TASSIE state interviews.

[22] In cases where there are no approved providers available to supply supplemental services to disabled or limited English proficient students, the district is required to provide supplemental services, either directly or through a contract.

While states were focused on the process of approving providers for services in 2002-03, many states did not establish systems for monitoring provider performance or a process for withdrawing providers from an approved list.[23] Twenty-two states completed standards for monitoring providers and 20 states completed standards for withdrawing providers in 2002-03. Alternatively, 20 states that provided data on the development of standards for monitoring providers reported that they had not yet established systems for monitoring performance, and 23 states reported that they were still developing a process for withdrawing approval of providers. Most of the states that had developed or were working on their monitoring process planned to rely on reports from one or multiple outside sources (e.g., districts, schools, providers, parents), and two states reported that they were using an outside entity (their regional education laboratory) to evaluate provider performance.

- The majority of states that began addressing monitoring issues emphasized the gathering of student performance data (primarily on assessments) as part of their proposed monitoring process, but they also identified other sources of data to be collected (e.g., reports on attendance and the number of dropouts, parent and school or district satisfaction surveys).
- In five states, the frequency of provider monitoring differed, depending on the provider's approval status (e.g., full vs. conditional approval).
- Of the 20 states that established standards for withdrawing provider approval, eleven states reported that they adopted only the criteria for withdrawal outlined in NCLB—failure to improve student achievement over a period of two years, failure to comply with eligibility requirements, and assurances and responsibilities of providers specified in NCLB. Another eight states reported that they were using student achievement data for a period of less than two years (e.g., for providers with only provisional approval), some form of parent and district satisfaction data, monitoring data, and evaluation data from forms completed by providers and districts.

Case study states reflected the range of implementation that existed in 2002-03: Louisiana had developed a systematic approach to provider identification and monitoring (see the description in Exhibit 29), whereas Maryland and Arizona had yet to consider monitoring. Michigan had approved 24 providers and was planning to collect district summaries of student progress (however measured) and look at state assessment results; Washington formed a review committee that met periodically to review applications and to establish a monitoring tool.

[23] Data were not available for six states regarding standards for monitoring providers and for five states regarding the establishment of standards for withdrawal of provider approval (these states did not respond to the request for an interview).

Exhibit 29

State Criteria for Approving and Monitoring Supplemental Service Providers

Louisiana's SEA hired an outside firm that had worked with CCSSO to develop its Toolkit to assist the SEA in developing the state's supplemental services provider application and to train reviewers. In addition, district staff from districts with students eligible to receive services were interviewed to develop criteria for approving providers. The resulting Supplemental Education Services Model used three criteria against which the qualifications of providers were assessed:

(1) Was there a diagnostic assessment, or an appropriate process, that would be used by the provider to identify student weaknesses and achievement gaps, as well as to measure gains in student achievement (the latter for the purposes of provider accountability)? The diagnostic tool had to be tied to the curriculum of the provider, which should in turn be tied to state content standards.

(2) Was targeted remediation or instruction aimed at addressing the individual skill gaps revealed during the assessment and based on an individual learning plan?

(3) Was there a post-assessment to determine whether or not student gains occurred and a plan either for reteaching skills or for identifying new skill sets for instruction?

Prospective providers were asked to complete a three-step review process. The first step was to have them complete the provider application, which included the requirements outlined in NCLB (e.g., has a demonstrated record of effectiveness, is financially sound). In the second step, providers were asked to provide information related to the model's three requirements—the providers' diagnostic processes (how instruction would be individualized) and their methods for delivering services. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted to assess provider qualifications.

The state was also working on designing a monitoring process for providers that went beyond self-report data. As part of the state's larger effort to monitor after-school providers, the state had established an online database in January 2003 that providers used to submit data on each child receiving services. The database generated reports for the user as well as the state. The SEA was planning to add more information requirements to the existing system for supplemental service providers such as achievement data collected by providers. The data would allow the SEA to also look at a student's progress on state tests.

District Actions and Student Participation

School districts are responsible for notifying parents of their children's eligibility to receive supplemental services and for providing parents with adequate information to select providers for their children. Parents can select any approved provider in the area served by the school district or within a reasonable distance of the school district. School districts must make arrangements to reimburse providers directly for the services they provide to eligible students.

Few districts were required to offer supplemental services in 2002-03; of those that were, roughly half did so. Only 11 percent of Title I districts nationwide, or approximately 1,100 LEAs, had Title I schools in their second year or more of school improvement where students were eligible to receive supplemental services (see Exhibit 30). But just under half of the districts (48 percent or 500) that had identified schools required to offer supplemental services were implementing services by spring 2003 (these districts contained about 800 identified schools or 58 percent of the Title I schools required to offer supplemental services).

Districts not providing supplemental services in 2002-03 were predominantly small and rural, with medium to high poverty.

Exhibit 30

Districts That Offered Title I Supplemental Services, Among Districts Required to Offer Services

	2002-03
Districts:	
Number required to offer services	1,100
Number where services offered	500
Percent where services offered	48%
Title I schools:	
Number where services required	1,300
Number where services offered	800
Percent where services offered	58%

Exhibit reads: In 2002-03, there were an estimated 1,100 districts required to offer supplemental services (regardless of the provision of services) to low-income students because they had Title I schools identified for improvement for more than one year. The data presented in this exhibit are estimates at the 95 percent confidence interval with 32 degrees of freedom and hence the numbers may have been higher or lower than indicated.

Note: The numbers are estimates based on district survey responses. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number required to offer services by the number offering services. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Nationwide, an estimated 1,300 identified Title I schools were required to offer supplemental services in 2002-03 (regardless of whether they actually provided services). The number of schools and students in 2002-03 affected by supplemental services requirements was not large either, whereas district size and location significantly influenced whether there were students eligible for services. As defined by respondents to the district survey, these are the Title I schools identified for two or more years. The median number of schools in a district with students eligible to receive services was one (the average was four), but there were significant differences by district size and location with very large and urban districts having the highest numbers of schools (13 and 7 schools, respectively). The median reflects the composition of districts with identified schools; that is, more than half (59 percent) of districts with schools identified for improvement were small and medium districts that averaged very few identified schools (e.g., the average number of Title I schools that had eligible students was two in medium districts compared with 13 in very large districts).

Nationwide, roughly 7 percent of eligible students in districts that offered supplemental services received services from an approved provider. Among districts that reported they had schools required to offer supplemental services in 2002-03, there were an estimated 791,000 students from low-income families eligible to receive supplemental services.

In districts that actually offered services, an estimated 592,000 students were eligible and 42,000 of those students (7 percent) received services from an approved provider (see Exhibit 31).

Exhibit 31

Students in Identified Schools Eligible for and Receiving Supplemental Services, Among Districts That Reported Having Identified Schools and Provided Services [24]

	2002-03
Estimated number of students eligible to receive services in districts providing services	592,000
Number of students that received services from an approved provider in districts providing services	42,000
Percent of eligible students	7%

Exhibit reads: Among districts that offered services, an estimated 592,000 students were eligible to receive supplemental educational services in 2002-03 because their schools were identified for improvement under Title I for more than one year. The data presented in this exhibit are estimates based on a 95 percent confidence interval with 32 degrees of freedom and estimates have been rounded.

Note: The percentage was calculated by dividing the number of students who received services by the number of students eligible for services in districts that provided services. The numbers are estimates based on districts that provided services. The estimates of the number of students eligible for and that received supplemental services in 2002-03 has a 95 percent confidence interval of 111,000 to 1,073,000 eligible students and a 95 percent confidence interval of 23,000 to 61,000 students that received services. The estimates of the number of students who *received* services are based on the 48 percent of districts with schools that were required to offer and provided supplemental services to students in identified Title I schools; this is also true of the estimated number of low-income students eligible to receive supplemental services in districts offering these services (see footnote below regarding these estimates). See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

- The median number of students *eligible* to receive services per district that provided supplemental services was 500 (the average was 2,400). In 40 percent of the districts with identified Title I schools where supplemental services were offered, no students *received* services. In the remaining 60 percent of districts with identified Title I schools where some students received services during the 2002-03 school year, the median number that received supplemental services was 80 students (the average was 200).

[24] The 791,000 students *eligible* to receive supplemental services included students in all districts with Title I schools identified for two or more years that reported they had Title I schools required to offer supplemental services to students, regardless of whether or not the district offered services. The numbers are underestimated for all students eligible for services because 46 percent of districts required to offer supplemental services reported they did not have schools required to provide supplemental services and did not provide any data on numbers of students. The estimates of the number of students who *received* services are based on the 48 percent of districts with schools required to offer supplemental services and provided supplemental services to students in identified Title I schools; this is also true of the estimated number of low-income students eligible to receive supplemental services in districts offering these services (hence the number of students receiving services is a more accurate estimate).

- Another 14,000 students (2 percent) in districts that offered supplemental services received services from providers that were not approved by the state (e.g., delays in states identifying approved providers or a lack of approved providers in the area encouraged some districts to begin providing some sort of supplemental services to help students before approved providers became available).

Again, there were significant differences at the district level in the number of *eligible* students by district size and location, and by district size in the number of students *receiving* supplemental services. So, for example, the average number of eligible students in suburban districts that provided supplemental services was around 1,500, but in urban districts the average was around 7,200 students. The average number of students that received supplemental services in medium districts was 94, whereas the average number of students was 535 in very large districts. At the school level there was also some variation (see Exhibit 32).

The number of Title I students that received supplemental services varied considerably across schools. The average number was higher in schools with higher poverty levels. More than a third (37 percent) of continuously identified Title I schools had none or fewer than 10 students receiving services as of spring 2003 (see Exhibit 32). However, 16 percent had more than 100 of their students receiving services. As a result, the median number of students who received supplemental services in Title I schools that continued to be identified in 2002-03 (in districts that provided services) was 24 whereas the average was 64.

Exhibit 32

Distribution of Continuously Identified Schools That Offered Supplemental Services by Number of Participating Students

Number of students who received Title I supplemental services:	Percentage of schools where supplemental services offered
None	22
1 to 9 students	15
10 to 99 students	47
100 or more students	16

Exhibit reads: Among Title I schools in districts that offered supplemental services, 22 percent had no students receive supplemental services in 2002-03.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE principal survey.

Several considerations influenced parents' decisions when offered supplemental services for their children, and transportation issues were a deciding factor for many parents. Parents often chose providers more for logistics and convenience than for educational concerns as revealed in parent focus groups. How far children had to travel for services was a critical issue for parents. In a small rural district, for example, parents did not want to bus their children 20 miles after school to receive services, particularly because the identified school was

offering programs similar to supplemental services taught by teachers they knew. (Alternatively, parents in a large district indicated that they would have definitely taken advantage of supplemental services if they were available because they felt that the after-school programs on-site were more like homework clubs than targeted intervention.) A large urban district tried to minimize travel logistics by recommending providers that were nearest identified schools. In addition, parents of eligible students interviewed generally said they liked and trusted their children's schools and teachers, even though the schools were identified for improvement. Parents often based their judgment of a school on the accessibility and personality of the teacher (e.g., if he or she was caring or not) and the school environment. In some cases, inadequate parent information about supplemental services, as discussed later in this section, may have affected parents' decisions as well.

Parent focus group data were reflected in the results of a 2003 national poll of the public's attitudes toward public schools, where 54 percent of public school parents indicated they would have preferred tutoring provided by teachers in their child's school, and 42 percent would have preferred tutoring provided by an outside agency if their child had been in a school identified for improvement (four percent did not know) (Lowell and Gallup 2003). Case studies of 15 districts conducted in a 2002-03 study of the implementation of NCLB reported similar findings (Center on Education Policy 2003). Officials in several of these case study districts attributed low participation in tutoring services to "the limited number of approved providers available in some areas, the late start for initiating this requirement, difficulties in managing and administering the program, and the need to change families' concepts of 'school' to encompass a longer learning day in a variety of settings" (p. 5).

Among districts that provided supplemental services, 62 percent made these services available to all students from low-income families because demand did not exceed Title I funding requirements. Case study data from 2002-03 suggest that districts were taking various approaches to determine how to prioritize services when demand exceeded resources.[25] A large urban case study district prioritized services to the lowest achieving low-income students because demand exceeded resources, but this was not the situation in other districts. Before determining whether services needed to be targeted or prioritized, several districts in a separate set of case studies considered the number of students attending identified schools and the amount of Title I dollars available to fund supplemental services. Other districts determined whether or not it was necessary to assign priority for services on the basis of the initial response they received from the letters sent to parents of eligible students regarding the availability of supplemental services (ED 2004b).

As noted above, more than half (52 percent) of districts required to offer supplemental services (primarily small, rural, and medium- to high-poverty districts) were not implementing supplemental services in 2002-03. The most frequent reason districts cited for not having provided services was that no parents had signed up for services (47 percent), but a quarter of the districts (24 percent) were still notifying parents and setting up services, and 17 percent had not

[25] According to ED's non-regulatory guidance, all students from low-income families who attend Title I schools identified for the second year or more of school improvement are eligible to receive supplemental services. However, if available district funds are insufficient to provide supplemental educational services to eligible students, the school district must give priority to the lowest-achieving students (ED 2003b).

yet received a list of providers from the state.[26] According to focus groups with parents, awareness of options appeared to be only one factor that influenced their choice of services. Few parents requested supplemental services for reasons that included preexisting after-school programs or providers located far from the school.

Fewer than half the principals of schools required to offer supplemental services reported that they had eligible students. In Title I schools that continued to be identified in 2002-03 (i.e., identified for at least two years), 44 percent reported that they had students eligible to receive supplemental services. Because NCLB requires that students in low-income families in Title I schools in their second year of improvement be offered supplemental services, these numbers suggest that principals did not understand this requirement. Other explanations were suggested by the case study sites, including the transitional nature of AYP definitions. In two case study states, districts were told by their states to delay offering supplemental services in schools that might be identified for two consecutive years until new AYP definitions were in place. Both Michigan and Washington were changing their AYP definitions, and thus defining a school's status during the 2002-03 school year was subject to considerable confusion. As a result, the number of schools that offered supplemental services in these states may have been less than expected, and principals' knowledge about the requirement to offer supplemental services to their students may have been compromised.

Lack of providers in the area was the most significant challenge to districts in 2002-03. Districts with identified schools that provided services reported that the most significant challenge they faced in implementing supplemental services in 2002-03 was the lack of providers in the area (48 percent). Sixty-one percent of districts cited serious challenges not listed on the survey (see Exhibit 33). These challenges included not having been provided a list of service providers by the state, services offered by providers that did not match local needs (e.g., services available online but parents had no computers, no services for grades one to four), the inadequate quality of providers available, and service contract issues such as responsibility for students with poor attendance—reasons similar to those reported by districts that had not yet begun providing services. The survey data reflected the experiences of case study districts and the issues considered by parents in selecting services as described in parent focus groups.

[26] Districts may be granted a waiver to not provide supplemental services if no approved providers make services available in the general geographic location served by the district or via distance learning and if the district provides evidence that it cannot provide services (ED 2003b). But case study data suggest that parents may define "a reasonable distance" within or outside the boundaries of a district differently than the district does.

Exhibit 33

Challenges Faced by Districts That Implemented Supplemental Services, Among Districts That Provided Services

Type of challenge	Great extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all
Lack of providers in the area	48	6	6	41
Lack of an established reputation for providers with parents	18	27	24	30
Competition from existing after-school programs	16	8	33	44
Inadequacy of an amount equal to 20% of the district's Title I allocation for meeting all requests for services or providing transportation to all students who request a transfer to alternate schools	6	3	11	81
Inadequate time for parents to learn about supplemental services	3	13	22	62
Inadequate information for parents about supplemental services	1	8	20	71
Other	61	19	7	13

Exhibit reads: Among districts that provided supplemental services in 2002-03, 48 percent responded that a lack of providers in the area was a challenge to a great extent to implementing supplemental services, 6 percent responded that such a lack was a challenge to a moderate extent, 6 percent responded that it was a challenge to a small extent, and 41 percent responded that it was not a challenge at all.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Communication With Parents

A majority of districts with identified Title I schools missed the deadline for notifying parents of their public school choice option before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. NCLB calls for districts to notify parents about eligibility for public school choice *before* the beginning of the school year (the first day of school), but some leeway was granted for the 2002-03 school year (i.e., by the beginning of the 2002-03 school year) as outlined in the U.S. Department of Education's non-regulatory guidance (ED 2002). As shown in Exhibit 34, 45 percent of districts with identified Title I schools that offered choice notified parents about their option for Title I public school choice before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year; on average seven weeks before school began. Notification continued through the school year (on average 10 weeks into the school year).

Exhibit 34

Timing of Notification to Parents of Students in Identified Title I Schools About Eligibility for School Choice, Among Districts That Offered Choice

When parents were notified	Percent of districts	Average number of weeks
Before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year	45	7
At the beginning of the 2002-03 school year	23	NA
After the beginning of the 2002-3 school year	42	10

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified schools that offered choice options, 45 percent notified parents of children in identified Title I schools about their eligibility for public school choice before the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. The average timing of notification was seven weeks before the school year began.

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 percent because some districts notified parents more than once. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Both districts and schools had taken part in the notification process regarding public school choice and supplemental services, with most having relied on written communication. Almost all districts sent written notices to parents; just slightly fewer than half held parent meetings (see Exhibit 35). Twelve percent of districts surveyed reported that they used other means (other than those listed in Exhibit 35) to communicate with parents about their school choice options, including local newspapers, local cable television, the district Web site, newsletters, computerized phone messages to parents, parent and community or church network group phone hot lines, and the district welcome or enrollment center. Many districts (87 percent) used more than one method to communicate with parents regarding school choice and a little more than half (57 percent) of districts had used more than one method to communicate with parents regarding supplemental services. Case study data also suggest that more than one form of communication was often used in 2002-03.

About a third of continuously identified schools (32 percent) reported that the district alone handled communication regarding school choice, and a similar percentage reported that the district alone handled communication regarding supplemental services. However, schools were involved in other activities such as collecting information on eligible students and responding to parents' questions about the information sent by the district or to questions about the types of services that were going to be offered. The role the schools played in communicating with parents was critical as seen in some case study districts. For example, in a very large urban case study district, parents felt a close connection only to school staff and therefore looked to them for information about the status of the school and their school choice options. In a separate set of case studies on supplemental services parents reported frequently relying on their children's teachers and schools to help them make decisions about service providers (ED 2004b).

Exhibit 35

Methods Used by Districts to Communicate School Choice and Supplemental Services Options to Parents, Among Districts With Identified Schools and That Offered Title I Choice and Supplemental Services

Communication method	Percent of districts with identified Title I schools	
	About school choice	About supplemental services
Written notification sent home to parents about school choice options or supplemental services available to them	89	99
Parent meetings to publicize and discuss school choice options or supplemental services	45	43
Discussions with parents held by classroom teachers, principals, and other school staff about supplemental services options	NA	50
Individual meetings with interested parents	NA	40
Public service announcements	22	32
Enrollment fairs or other events where parents of students in schools identified for improvement can learn about alternate schools or about providers and the services they provide	8	13
Open houses in alternate schools for parents of students in schools identified for improvement	6	NA
Other methods	12	6

Exhibit reads: Among districts with identified Title I schools, 89 percent that offered choice used written notification to communicate with parents about the school choice options available to them in 2002-03, and 99 percent that offered supplemental services used written notification to communicate with the parents of eligible students about supplemental services.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Parents did not necessarily understand the information contained in notification materials. Case study data indicated that both language barriers and confusing terminology contributed to the lack of understanding. In two urban districts, the need to translate letters into multiple languages to communicate with non-English speaking parents was a problem. One of these districts had the resources to deal with this issue, hiring bilingual staff and translating information for parents into 10 languages. The other district reported inadequate staff and funds to address this issue, and letters informing parents of students in identified schools of the option to transfer their children to non-identified schools were sent out only in English, even though the district serves a population speaking 36 languages. Sometimes confusion stemmed from the presence of state accountability initiatives that operated in conjunction with their Title I accountability systems under NCLB. In Arizona, for example, the different ratings given to a

school under the state initiative (AZ LEARNS) versus the state's accountability system for NCLB has caused considerable confusion among parents because the various labels used sound contradictory. The new state labeling process had in essence created a dual accountability system because a school could receive a "maintaining" or "improving" label from the state but still be considered in school improvement under NCLB.

Some districts downplayed the information provided to parents on Title I choice, whereas others had taken a number of steps to inform parents about their choice options. In some cases, district notices focused on the benefits offered at identified schools and downplayed the information on choice (see Exhibit 36).

Exhibit 36
Examples of Parent Information on Public School Choice

In one case study district, the letters sent to parents in October 2002 never directly used the term "identified school." Instead, the district notified parents that their school had been "designated to receive Title I School Improvement Funds this year…to be used in our intensive school improvement activities" and that the school qualified for these funds because of "past achievement scores." It was not until the third paragraph that parents were told that the district "offers you choices in which school your child attends" and that the school would be "delighted to work with you regarding the options that exist." As one respondent noted, the letters read as though the school had just won something.

At an identified elementary school in another district, the principal held parent meetings to discuss the school's status. She stressed the additional resources that had become available as a result of the school having moved up to the next level of identification under the state's system—"I made the status positive." A combination of state and federal funds supported the addition of a social worker, a part-time nurse and curriculum specialist, two additional teachers, a vice-principal, more resources for professional development and materials, and a parent center. In this case, only five parents chose another school, and parent involvement generally increased.

Parents in case study districts reported receiving varying amounts of information about their supplemental service provider options. Some parents received nothing but a letter from the district informing them of the supplemental services provisions of NCLB. Other parents had been invited to district- or school-sponsored meetings held to clarify their options for supplemental services. Some parents indicated that they found out about providers and services through the news media. In other cases, parents indicated that they had received very little information on the topic, if any, in 2002-03.

Some districts went beyond the basic requirements in the law regarding parent notification to generate parent interest in supplemental services. For example, a district in a separate set of case studies hosted vendor fairs at the identified schools, used Title I district parent involvement funds to pay teachers to call parents to encourage them to apply for tutoring services, and encouraged principals and other school staff to conduct home visits to invite parents to take advantage of the supplemental services opportunity. Nevertheless, despite its carefully planned efforts to encourage parent participation, the district did not succeed in filling all the slots it expected to fund for supplemental services (ED 2004b).

Roughly a fifth of districts with eligible students in 2002-03 had not yet communicated with parents regarding their right to receive supplemental services. Twenty-one percent of districts with eligible students had not yet communicated with parents as of spring 2003 because the district had not yet begun to provide supplemental services. (Reasons for the delays in service delivery were discussed earlier in this chapter.)

IV Corrective Actions

Planning and support are intermediate steps that districts take with low-performing schools, along with offering parents the option of school choice and supplemental services. If schools do not make AYP for four years, districts are required to impose more intense interventions. The combination of support to identified schools and consequences for continued poor performance are key elements of NCLB and state accountability systems, and are intended to drive school improvement by creating incentives for educators to improve their practice.

The data in 2002-03 suggest that the impacts of corrective actions had not been broad. The data also indicate that the pattern of interventions did not change under NCLB requirements—the pattern of interventions most frequently employed by districts with identified schools was similar to that in 2001-02 before the implementation of NCLB.

Corrective Actions

If Title I schools continue not to make AYP for two years after initial identification (i.e., do not make AYP for four years), NCLB requires districts to take a least one of a series of six corrective actions defined in the law and consistent with state law, Section 1116(b)(7): (1) requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum or instructional program, (2) significantly decreasing the management authority level at the school level, (3) appointing an outside expert to advise the school, (4) extending the school day or year, (5) restructuring the internal organization of a school, or (6) replacing school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP.

Because only a few districts reported that they had schools identified for improvement for three years or more in 2002-03, few were required to take the corrective actions specified under NCLB. Approximately 400 districts, or just 4 percent of all districts nationwide, reported that they had Title I schools identified for improvement for three years or more. However, because of rules under IASA and transition rules under NCLB regarding school status in 2002-03, as discussed in Chapter I, not all schools identified for improvement for three years in 2002-03 were in corrective action status. Thus the number of districts required to take corrective action may have been even lower in 2002-03. At the same time, some districts were unable to report how long some of their schools had been identified for improvement, meaning that the number could also be underestimated. About a third of the districts with identified schools in 2002-03 were unable to provide information about how long those schools had been identified for improvement.

The corrective actions most frequently taken in 2002-03 could be characterized as assistance rather than interventions—a pattern similar to that in 2001-02 before the implementation of NCLB. Corrective actions taken ranged from those that overlap with assistance and support (e.g., requiring a new research-based curriculum) to those that are clearly interventions (e.g., replacing school staff). The expectation that the pattern of interventions would change with the mandates of NCLB was not supported by this study's 2002-03 data. Under IASA, districts were not required to take corrective actions if their states did not yet have

an assessment system approved under Title I, and only 21 states had these final assessment systems in place as of October 2002. Because NCLB requires districts to impose corrective actions no matter what the approval status of their state's assessment and accountability systems, it was predicted that these stronger consequences would occur more frequently under NCLB. Given the small number of districts with schools identified for improvement for three years or more (or subject to corrective actions) in 2002-03, this pattern might change in the future.

Exhibit 37 compares interventions taken by districts with schools identified for different numbers of years to assess whether or not districts with schools identified for a longer period of time (three or more years in this case) were taking different types of corrective actions compared with districts that had schools identified for only one or two years. The data indicated that the most common corrective actions taken in 2002-03 were requiring implementation of a new research-based program, appointing an outside expert, and extending the school day or year regardless of the number of years of identification. Far fewer districts applied interventions such as replacing the school staff who were relevant to the failure to make AYP.

In 2002-03, districts with schools identified for improvement for three years or more were no more likely to take corrective actions with their identified schools than districts that had schools identified for only one or two years. Compared with districts that only had schools identified for one or two years, districts with schools identified for three years or more were equally likely to require curriculum adoption, appoint an outside expert, decrease school management authority, or take any of the other corrective actions in NCLB. These data are consistent with district assistance findings regarding targeted support for school improvement (see Exhibit 18 in Chapter II) that showed that districts tended to provide some form of support (e.g., revising the school improvement plan, on-site assistance) to all their schools, particularly identification of research-based strategies. In addition, a majority of identified schools had adopted new curricula. In this context, it was not surprising that actions taken with schools identified for three or more years were similar to those taken with other identified schools.

- Some districts required schools in corrective action to undertake more intensive and systematic planning activities for instructional improvement, as well as increased monitoring of school activities (see Exhibit 38).
- In some districts, actions such as replacing the principal—a common occurrence in urban districts—were not called corrective actions, thereby mitigating the roles of some corrective actions as incentives to improve school performance.
- At the school level, some principals did not emphasize corrective actions because they believed it was more beneficial to stress improvements. For example, a principal in an identified school indicated she was more focused on making improvements by bringing school staff along through professional development and participation in the school reform model rather than emphasizing potential corrective actions. A coach at the school commented: "We hear about corrective action, but people are working too hard, we can't focus on it. We're trying to be more effective." A principal in another elementary school stated: "I try to keep these things [AYP definitions, program improvement status] away from teachers. The hammer is being held over my head, so I

don't need to hold it over my teachers' heads. They are working very hard. I try to keep them insulated. I tell them not to worry about it."

Exhibit 37

District Actions Taken With Schools Identified for Improvement in 2002-03, by Number of Years of Identification

Interventions	Percent of districts with schools identified 1 or 2 years only	Percent of districts with schools identified for 3 or more years only	Percent of all districts with schools identified for 3 or more years
Requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum/instructional program	53	56	55
Significantly decreasing management authority level at the school level	7	11	15
Appointing an outside expert to advise the school	45	30	41
Extending the school day or year	34	61	54
Restructuring the internal organization of the school	20	8	8
Replacing school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	4	9	5
Reassigning or demoting the principal	8	17	13
Replacing all or most of the school staff	2	4	2
Reopening the school as a public charter school	1	0	0
Entering into a contract with a private management company to operate the school	1	1	1
Having the state take over the school	1	1	1

Exhibit reads: Among districts with schools identified for one or two years only, 53 percent required identified schools to implement a new research-based curriculum or instructional program, whereas 56 percent of districts with schools identified for three or more years only (and not one or two years) required these schools to take this action. Among all districts with schools identified for three or more years, 55 percent required these schools to take this action.

Note: See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Exhibit 38
Corrective Actions Taken With Identified Title I Schools

A large urban district focused attention on seven Title I schools identified by the state as "intensive schools" and identified for corrective action under Title I. In these "intensive schools," fewer than 25 percent of students scored satisfactory or above on the state assessment during the 2001-02 school year in at least two of the three content areas of mathematics, reading, and science, nor did the school make AYP for two years in a row in the same content area in which performance had been low. The state provided these schools with grants from its school improvement reserve funds[27] ($95,000 per school initially), and the district required these schools to adopt research-based instructional approaches and receive advice from outside experts (in this case, district specialists), along with intensified district monitoring of the use of school budgets and classroom activities. In total, the district required these schools to carry out both school improvement activities and corrective actions: (1) revise their school improvement plans to incorporate research-based "high-yield strategies" suggested by district staff (e.g., specific instructional strategies, ongoing collaboration and support among staff, use of data or diagnostic assessments to guide instruction); (2) write a grant application for the state school improvement reserve funds that reflected the goals and activities in their school plans; (3) attend meetings twice a month with the core district academic staff, including Title I staff, and once a month with the other intensive schools; (4) develop indicators of student progress against goals in the school improvement plans; and (5) have the principals and assistant principals conduct walk-throughs of classrooms to observe implementation of instructional strategies.

Survey data supplied by principals supported district reports regarding the types of corrective actions taken with identified schools. Principals in schools that continued to be identified in 2002-03 (identified for at least two years) reported that the three most frequent corrective actions taken with their schools were: requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum or instructional program (82 percent); extending the school day or year (56 percent); and appointing an outside expert to advise the school (51 percent). Except with regard to the implementation of a new research-based curriculum or instructional program, there were no significant differences in the interventions imposed on schools identified for two years or more, compared with schools identified for at least three years.

Even though much of the curriculum adoption carried out in districts applied to all schools as described in Chapter II, some identified schools were also required to implement specific curricula or instructional practices to address low performance as seen in case study districts (see Exhibit 39).

[27] Section 1003 of NCLB requires that each state reserve 2 percent of the amount the state receives under Subpart 2, Part A, of Title I funds for fiscal years 2002 and 2003, and 4 percent of the amount received for fiscal years 2004 through 2007 to carry out the state education agency's school improvement responsibilities (e.g., establishing a statewide system of technical support for districts with identified schools).

Exhibit 39

Example of Identified Schools Required to Implement New Instructional Approach

In a very large urban district, identified schools that had not made AYP for three years and might move up to the next level of interventions under the state accountability system were required to implement one of two school reform models that specified a particular instructional approach—Success for All or Direct Instruction; the schools were also required to implement the district's new reading and language arts curriculum. To assist with the implementation of these programs, staff received five days of professional development at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, displacing the three days of preservice professional development that teachers normally received. The professional development was customized to address the problems related to reading achievement at each school. During the school year, staff received four to five more training sessions at their schools through their school-based facilitators. An outside consultant made visits on a periodic basis to monitor implementation and answer questions. In this state, as part of the state's accountability system, schools that do not make AYP for three or more years must also receive the services of a full-time distinguished educator.

Due to the transition rules described in Chapter I, for 2002-03, there was no requirement that schools be identified for restructuring status. At the same time, some districts took actions with identified schools that are included in the five interventions outlined in NCLB for school restructuring: (1) replacing all or most of the school staff, (2) reopening the school as a public charter school, (3) entering into a contract with a private management company to operate the school, (4) having the state take over the school, or (5) other major restructuring initiative. Districts that took these actions most frequently reported replacing all or most of the staff (see Exhibit 37).

Change Over Time

The most frequent corrective action taken in both 2001-02 and 2002-03 with Title I schools identified for improvement was the requirement to implement a new curriculum or instructional program. The next most frequent actions were appointing an outside expert to advise the school and extending the school day or year. As noted above, the expectation was that the pattern of interventions would change with the requirements of NCLB. In general, the expectation was that, because NCLB now required districts to take specific corrective actions with schools that did not make AYP for two years after being identified, changes would occur in the types of interventions taken with these schools. To test this hypothesis, the corrective actions taken by districts that had identified schools in 2001-02 and 2002-03 were compared. Exhibit 40 illustrates the actions taken by districts that had identified schools in both 2001-02 and 2002-03. None of the differences across years were statistically significant.

Exhibit 40

District Actions Taken in 2001-02 and 2002-03 With Schools Identified for Improvement, Among Districts That Had Identified Schools in Both Years

Interventions	2001-02	2002-03
Requiring the implementation of a new research-based curriculum/instructional program	46	57
Significantly decreasing management authority level at the school level	17	12
Appointing an outside expert to advise the school	35	49
Extending the school day or year	40	40
Reassigning or demoting the principal	6	12
Replacing all or most of the school staff	4	1
Entering into a contract with a private management company to operate the school	<1	<1
Having the state take over the school	<1	<1

Exhibit reads: Among districts that had schools identified in both years, 46 percent reported that they had required identified schools to implement a new research-based curriculum or instructional program in 2001-02, and 57 percent reported that they imposed this requirement on identified schools in 2002-03.

Note: There were no statistically significant differences across years among these interventions. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

Several factors may have contributed to the lack of shifts in the types of corrective actions taken by districts as illustrated by case study data. As noted earlier, because some districts were in states that were revising their AYP definitions, they had not imposed the corrective actions on schools that they might otherwise have done. Case study districts used a combination of corrective actions and additional resources or technical assistance to improve all low-performing schools. Staff interviews suggest that a focus on interventions without assistance could generate negative responses from school staff. Together, assistance and corrective actions encouraged staff to reexamine current practices, to place more focus on instruction, and to place a greater urgency on making reforms.

Nonetheless, compared with 2001-02, there was a significant increase in the percentage of districts with identified schools reporting that they were increasing their monitoring and district oversight of identified schools, as illustrated in the case study examples provided above and in comparisons of survey data. In 2001-02, 23 percent of districts with identified schools (regardless of the number of years of identification) reported increasing monitoring and district oversight of identified schools; in 2002-03, 34 percent of districts with had identified schools in both years reported taking this action with their identified schools. In addition, a higher percentage of districts with *schools identified for three years or more* in both 2001-02 and 2002-03 reported that these schools had been given less discretion over school-level

spending and had less autonomy in selecting school improvement strategies compared with other schools identified for improvement (see Exhibit 41).

Exhibit 41

District Actions Taken in 2001-02 and 2002-03 With Schools Identified for Improvement for Three or More Years, Among Districts That Had Identified Schools in Both Years

Compared with other schools identified for improvement, schools identified for improvement for three or more years…	Percent of districts reporting "to a great extent"	
	2001-02	2002-03
Have less discretion over school-level spending	4	24
Have less autonomy in selecting school improvement strategies	4	29

Exhibit reads: Among districts with corrective action schools or schools identified for improvement for three or more years responding in both years, 4 percent of districts reported in 2001-02 that those schools had less discretion over school-level spending to a great extent compared with other schools identified for improvement. By comparison, 24 percent of districts in 2002-03 reported these actions.

Note: Differences were statistically significant for both actions. See the appendix for sample sizes and additional statistical information.

Source: TASSIE district survey.

V Conclusions

Findings of the *Evaluation of Title I Accountability Systems and School Improvement Efforts* (TASSIE) capture the first full year of implementation of the accountability provisions of *No Child Left Behind*. They show that states, districts, and schools were making progress in meeting NCLB requirements. States and districts were taking steps to create new accountability systems, to measure and communicate about schools' progress, and to devise strategies to improve schools. Schools created plans and adopted new instructional programs. However, progress was uneven, and a big gap remained between the existing systems of accountability and the vision embodied in NCLB to create systems that support all schools and students to attain high standards.

Data from 2002-03 offer a first glimpse into the influence of NCLB on improving school performance. Identified schools and districts in 2002-03 were the first to be subject to many NLCB accountability requirements, and 2002-03 was the first year many related NCLB requirements at the state and district levels were in effect. Declines by about a third in both the number of identified schools (from 9,000 to 6,000) and the number of districts with at least one such school (from 2,900 to 1,900) from 2001-02 to 2002-03 directly affected which schools and districts were subject to NCLB accountability requirements. Because of transitional policies that applied for only 2002-03 and new definitions of AYP under NCLB to be implemented in 2003-04, inferences about trends in numbers of schools and districts identified for improvement should be made with caution. Similarly, case study data suggest that some confusion about how NCLB accountability provisions applied may have hampered full implementation in 2002-03. With the implementation of new AYP definitions under NCLB following 2002-03 and growing understanding of NCLB accountability provisions over time, the effect of NCLB likely will become more visible.

Nevertheless, educators at all levels of the education system were responding to NCLB's accountability requirements. For each major provision, many policymakers and practitioners took action to build accountability systems that complied with NCLB and made sense in their own jurisdictions. At the same time, findings from 2002-03 show that some substantial improvements in implementation were needed in order for states, districts, and schools to be fully implementing NCLB accountability requirements. Highlights of 2002-03 included:

- Most states and districts reported on student and school assessment results and made the information available to the public through multiple channels, but not all of NCLB reporting requirements had been implemented.
- Many states and districts provided technical assistance, additional staff and professional development to schools identified for improvement. Yet two-thirds of continuously identified schools reported no access to certain key forms of state or district on-site assistance (e.g., full-time staff to support teacher development), either because they were in districts and states that did not provide that assistance or because states or districts could not serve all of their identified schools.

- To improve their students' performance, many identified schools gave increased attention to achievement results, adopted new curricula, used school reform models or added new supplemental instructional programs. At the same time, the adoption of new curricula or school reform models was often not accompanied by related professional development and other supports.
- Some districts and schools had organizational structures in place that could provide and take advantage of assistance; but many—especially small and rural districts—did not.
- An increasing percentage of districts offered students in identified schools the choice of moving to other public schools that were not identified. However, a third of the districts with schools identified for improvement did not provide public school choice in 2002-03.
- Some districts began to provide access to supplemental educational services, but half of the districts with schools identified for two or more years did not offer supplemental services.
- Even where public school choice and supplemental services were offered, only a small fraction of parents of eligible students exercised these options.

The study's survey and interview data suggest broad support for the goals of NCLB and serious attempts to implement the new accountability provisions. Moving forward, however, states and districts faced significant challenges in 2002-03 in meeting the law's goal of changing instructional practices in ways that will ensure that no child is left behind.

Among these challenges was a shortage of capacity in the broadest sense of the word: enough people with the knowledge and skills to serve as distinguished educators or school support team members or mentors to help schools improve; enough supplemental service providers to meet the need, especially in rural schools; enough translators and staff to adequately inform all parents of their options. Staff in districts with large numbers of identified schools were already stretched to the limits to provide sufficient help to all eligible schools, and smaller districts lacked the professional staff to provide the help required. As more Title I schools are identified for improvement, this challenge will likely increase both for districts and state departments of education whose staff are similarly stretched thin. District and school staff also need access to greater expertise in curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development, both within and outside the district. Such expertise will be especially important if district and school staff are to move beyond support for planning and alignment to help schools make the classroom-level changes that will help students reach proficiency.

Although the 2002-03 school year was the first full year of implementation of NCLB, the general lag between the passage of a new law and the time when schools and their communities grasp its implications suggests that the 2003-04 school year, the final year of this study, will show how implementation is changing over time.

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Appendix
Method Notes

Sampling Information

The evaluation consists of five related, longitudinal components:

- **A survey of Title I administrators in a nationally representative sample of approximately 1,300 districts that receive Title I funds**. The universe of eligible districts was developed using information from the 1999 Common Core of Data (CCD) and the 2000 Quality Education Data (QED) database. Districts were stratified according to size (enrollment), degree of poverty (based on the percentage of children living in poverty within each district), and geographic region.[28] The stratification by geographic region was done to facilitate selection of an oversample from three states that are the focus of the analysis of school performance. Districts were selected using a simple random sample without replacement within each stratum. All very large districts were sampled; approximately equal numbers of districts were selected from the other size strata. Each poverty stratum includes approximately one-third of all children in the sampling frame. The key respondent is the district Title I director. Survey topics for 2002-03 included state and local accountability systems, school and district identification, district support for school improvement, public reporting, public school choice, supplemental services, and interventions taken with identified schools. Response rates in 2002-03 were 89 percent.
- **A survey of principals in a national sample of 739 Title I schools identified as in need of improvement in 2001-02**. The sampling frame for schools in need of improvement in 2001-02 was developed in a two-stage process. First, lists of the schools in each of the sampled districts were developed from the 1999 CCD and the 2000 QED databases. Schools eligible for the sample were classified as regular, but not charter, in the CCD and served a grade range that could be classified as elementary, middle, or high school. In the second stage, sampled districts were asked to provide a list of current Title I schools in need of improvement at the time of the request in fall 2001. In states where Title I schools in need of improvement are identified by the state education agency (SEA), the list of schools identified on the basis of 2000-01 assessment data was requested. Only Title I schools identified for improvement in reading, mathematics, or both subjects were included in the sampling frame. The sampling frame of the resulting 4,054 Title I schools in need of improvement was stratified by district size, school level (elementary, middle, or high), poverty level, and geography. The sample was a nationally representative sample of Title I schools identified for improvement in 2001-02, but because schools continue to be surveyed for three years even if they move out of improvement, the sample is not a nationally representative sample over time (i.e., in 2002-03 and 2003-04 or the second and third years of data collection). Survey topics for 2002-03 included accountability criteria, public school choice, supplemental educational services, school improvement

[28] See Exhibit 2 for definitions of size and poverty strata.

activities, and interventions taken with the school. Response rates in 2002-03 were 85 percent.

- **Case studies of 20 schools identified for improvement under Title I in 15 districts in five states**. Case study schools were selected through a multiple-stage process in which states, then districts within those states, and then schools within those districts were chosen. Three critical dimensions for state sample selection were identified: state AYP definition, alignment of Title I and the general state accountability systems, and the state process for identifying schools in need of improvement. States were sorted along these three dimensions and selected through an iterative process to represent the actual variation. Within states, in consultation with the state Title I director, the largest urban districts were targeted as well as one suburban and one rural district. Within each urban district, two elementary schools identified for improvement were selected in consultation with the district Title I coordinator. In the rural and suburban districts, one elementary school was chosen (often the only identified school in those districts). Respondents include district staff (e.g., Title I director, superintendent, assessment director, professional development staff), school staff (e.g., principal, specialists, classroom teachers, parent coordinators), and parents. Interviews in 2002-03 were conducted with district and school staff and covered topics similar to those on the surveys. Parents of students in the identified case study schools were also interviewed about public reporting, public school choice, and supplemental services.
- **Analyses in three of the case study states of school performance data** for all schools in the state that serve elementary students. Eligible schools were those classified as regular, but not charter, schools, in CCD. The analysis contrasts scores of Title I schools in need of improvement, other Title I schools, and non-Title I schools for each state.
- **State level interviews and analyses of state accountability components**: grades and subjects in the state assessment systems, elements of the AYP formula, when identification information was provided to districts, corrective actions for schools and districts, supplemental services, the statewide system of support, and state reporting. Key respondents included state Title I directors and accountability staff.

Weights for Statistical Analyses

TASSIE district and school samples are stratified, random samples in which the probability of selection into the sample varies across strata. To estimate population parameters, the sampled districts (or schools) are weighted so that the total of the weights within a stratum equals the number of districts (or schools) in that stratum in the sampling frame.

Survey respondents are a portion of the full sample. To estimate population parameters from the survey respondents, the weights assigned to respondents within any stratum were modified, as customary in survey analyses, to "absorb" the weights that would otherwise accrue to non-responding schools in the stratum. Thus respondents' weights were adjusted to sum to the total number in the stratum.

The Year 1 technical appendix[29] for TASSIE describes in detail the method used to select the samples and the methods used to derive weights for the first year analysis. The analysis for Year 2 required two new sets of weights for each survey. The first is the set of weights used to summarize Year 2 data. These weights were constructed to estimate parameters for the total population of districts (and schools) from respondents to the 2002-03 survey. A second set of weights were computed for the longitudinal analyses that examine responses from schools and districts that completed the survey in 2001-02 and 2002-03.

Reconciling Differences in Population Estimates From Different Data Sources

National estimates for the total number of districts and schools and for the number in certain categories, may differ slightly depending on whether the estimate is derived from the TASSIE Eligibility file or the TASSIE 2002-03 district survey. For example, an estimate of the total number of Title I districts is reported to be 11,230 based on the Eligibility file, while it is 11,197 (sum of 1,824 and 9,373) based on the survey respondents. An estimated 1,873 districts (16.6 percent) had at least one identified Title I school in 2002-03 based on the TASSIE Eligibility dataset; the estimate is 1,824 districts (16.2 percent) based on the district survey. The discrepancies occur because the Eligibility file has complete information on all schools and districts in the sample, while the survey data is incomplete due to nonresponse.

In 2001-02, an estimated 26 percent of districts had at least one identified Title I school based on the Eligibility file; the percentage of districts was reported as 21 percent on the basis of data gathered from the district survey. The difference in the two estimates for 2001-02 and 2002-03 are not statistically significant. In 2001-02, there were an estimated 9,200 identified Title I schools based on the TASSIE Eligibility file; the number of identified Title I schools was reported as 8,078 on the basis of a weighted analysis of the number of respondents to the principal survey (in 2001-02, the survey sample was representative of Title I schools identified for improvement based on 2000-01 assessment data).

The method used to adjust for nonresponse in TASSIE, while customary, assumes that non-respondents are distributed in proportions equal to the respondents across other variables, such as eligibility for the study. TASSIE is in an unusual position for a survey in having information about the eligibility of the districts and schools that did not respond. For future waves of TASSIE we intend to modify the weighting procedure to reduce any discrepancies. In the modified procedure we will use all known data sources to classify schools prior to adjusting for non-response. In essence this extends the concept of "strata" beyond those that were used in the original sample selection (i.e., it is a type of post-stratification based in part on external sources of data).

Minimum Sample Size

We report parameter estimates when they are based on unweighted sample sizes of 20 or more. Because of this standard, it is sometimes not possible to report statistics for every cell in a cross-tabulation. Interpretations made of the corresponding Chi-square tests and p-values are

[29] Shields, P. M., Laguarda, K.G., Lash, A., Padilla, C., Winter, N., Woodworth, K., Uperesa, L, Javitz, H. (2004). *Evaluation of Title I Accountability and School Improvement Efforts (TASSIE): First Year Technical Appendix.* Menlo Park, Calif.: SRI International.

tentative and should be followed up with additional analyses (e.g., of subportions of the tables or recoded variables that combine low-frequency response categories) before drawing conclusions.

Definitions of Scales

The definitions of the scales used to measure district support and assistance, emphasizing related professional development, and teacher collaboration are described below.

District Support

Survey items about district support for **planning and data** use included the following:

D24. Does the district provide technical assistance with data analysis or planning to identified schools? The district assigns staff to work directly with individual schools to:

a. Review data to be sure identification is valid.

b. Analyze student achievement data to identify specific academic problems that caused the school to be identified.

c. Identify research-based strategies.

d. Provide additional data analysis, e.g., additional disaggregation or analysis of diagnostic assessments.

e. Analyze and revise the school's budget so that school resources are effectively allocated.

f. Review the school's staffing plan.

g. Write or revise a school's improvement plan.

h. Monitor progress throughout the school year toward goals established in the school improvement plan.

D25. Which of the following topics were addressed in the professional development supported by the district in identified schools?

h. Monitoring individual students' progress toward learning goals.

i. Analyzing and interpreting student achievement data.

Survey items about district support for **curriculum alignment** included the following:

D36. Has the district taken any of the following steps to assist schools in ensuring the consistency of curriculum and instruction with state or district standards?

1. Developed local content standards that provide more useful guidance to teachers than state content standards.
2. Published detailed curriculum guides with standards, frameworks, and pacing sequences.
3. Developed classroom-embedded assessments with a standard scoring rubric to monitor progress.
4. Developed model lesson plans based on standards.
5. Conducted regular checks of standards implementation in classrooms (e.g., by requiring lesson plans or students' work to be submitted, or by conducting walk-throughs).

6. Mapped out the alignment of required textbooks and instructional programs to standards.
7. Mapped out the alignment of required textbooks and instructional programs to assessments.
8. Analyzed available student achievement data to identify specific strengths and weaknesses related to the attainment of standards.

D25. Which of the following topics were addressed in the **professional development** supported by the district in identified schools?

d. Ensuring that curriculum and instruction are consistent with state and/or district content standards.

e. Ensuring that curriculum and instruction are consistent with state and/or district assessment.

Receiving a Minimum Level of Related District Assistance

District support for **implementing a new reading/language arts curriculum** was constructed by combining responses on six items. A dichotomous scale was created to distinguish between those who either agreed or strongly agreed (on average, a score of 4.0 or higher), compared to those who endorsed all other response categories (on average). The items included the following:

P39a. District helped to identify reading/language curricula/instructional programs that support instruction consistent with standards and assessments.

P39b. District disseminates useful information about reading/language arts curricula/instructional programs.

P39c. District assisted in selecting a reading/language arts curriculum/instructional program appropriate for our school.

P39e. District is helpful in securing support from publishers/program developers to assist with the implementation of our reading/language arts curriculum/instructional program.

P39f. District provides adequate support for implementation of our reading/language arts curriculum/instructional program.

P39g. District monitors implementation of our school's reading/language arts curriculum/instructional program.

District support for **implementing a new mathematics curriculum** was constructed by combining responses on six items. A dichotomous scale was created to distinguish between those who either agreed or strongly agreed (on average, a score of 4.0 or higher), compared to those who endorsed all other response categories (on average). The seven items included:

P42a. District helped to identify math curricula/instructional programs that support instruction consistent with standards and assessments.

P42b. District disseminates useful information about math curricula/instructional programs.

P42c. District assisted in selecting a math curriculum/instructional program appropriate for our school.

P42e. District is helpful in securing support from publishers/program developers to assist with the implementation of our math curriculum/instructional program.

P42f. District provides adequate support for implementation of our math curriculum/ instructional program.

P42g. District monitors implementation of our school's math curriculum/instructional program.

District support for **the use of a school reform model** was constructed by combining responses on six items. A dichotomous scale was created to distinguish between those who either agreed or strongly agreed (on average, a score of 4.0 or higher), compared to those who endorsed all other response categories (on average). The seven items included:

P36a. District helped to identify school reform models that support instruction consistent with standards and assessments.

P36b. District disseminates useful information about school reform models.

P36c. District assisted in selecting a school reform model appropriate for our school.

P36e. District is helpful in securing support from our model's design team to assist with implementation.

P36f. District provides adequate support for model implementation.

P36g. District encourages the use of school reform models that focus on instructional improvement.

P36h. District monitors implementation of our reform model.

Emphasizing Related Professional Development

Of nine areas of professional development, principals were asked to check the three that were the primary areas of emphasis in their schools. If they checked "reading/language arts instruction" they were counted as "emphasizing reading/language arts professional development." Analogous definitions were used for "mathematics instruction" and "implementation of a school reform model." This threshold is based on the underlying premise that reports of professional development that do not rise to this level are unlikely to be either intensive or frequent enough to be considered support for the related improvement activities.

Measure of Teacher Collaboration

Evidence that an identified school was engaged in teacher collaboration as a school improvement strategy was defined as "conducting at least one of five teacher collaboration activities at least a few times per year." The five items included:

P30a. Frequency with which majority of teachers at school participate in teacher work groups to analyze samples of student work.

P30b. Frequency with which majority of teachers at school participate in teacher work groups to develop teaching materials or activities for particular classes.

P30c. Frequency with which majority of teachers at school participate in observations in other teachers' classrooms to offer feedback and/or learn ideas (*excluding* observation for purposes of formal evaluation).

P30d. Frequency with which majority of teachers at school participate in teacher work groups to discuss student assessment data to make decisions about instruction.

P30e. Frequency with which majority of teachers at school participate in in-class coaching or mentoring.